

**Legislative Council Panel on Security
21 October 2008**

Policy Initiatives of Security Bureau

This note elaborates on the new and ongoing initiatives of the Security Bureau in the 2008/09 Policy Agenda.

New Initiatives

Provide Taiwan residents with further immigration facilitation

2. The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region is committed to further promoting and expanding trade, investment, tourism and other areas of economic co-operation between Hong Kong and Taiwan. On the immigration front, we have provided more facilitation for the entry of visitors from Taiwan in recent years. For example, the iPermit introduced in March 2002 allows Taiwan residents to submit online applications for entry permits through airlines and instantly obtain the confirmation notices. Moreover, since June 2006, holders of “Mainland Travel Permit for Taiwan Residents” with a valid entry/exit endorsement for the Mainland may visit Hong Kong without the need to apply for an entry permit from the Immigration Department separately.

3. In the light of the growing exchanges between Hong Kong and Taiwan in various areas, we will introduce two measures next year to further enhance the travel convenience of Taiwan residents –

First, the restriction that only two iPermits can be applied within 30 days will be lifted. This would provide greater convenience for “pack-and-go” travellers from Taiwan or those who wish to make multiple visits to Hong Kong in a short period; and

Secondly, the period of stay for iPermit and multiple entry permit holders will be extended from 14 days to 30 days in order to provide visitors with greater flexibility in planning their journeys.

Enhance cooperation with Macao in providing greater immigration convenience to residents traveling between the two places

4. The passenger flow between Hong Kong and Macao has been growing substantively in recent years owing to close ties between the two places. To enhance travel convenience for residents of the Hong Kong and Macao Special Administrative Regions, new travel convenience measures will be introduced from mid-2009 onwards.

5. After discussion with the Macao Special Administrative Region (SAR) Government, we will allow Macao permanent residents to use “e-Channels” at our control points after enrolment. We will also waive the arrangements for Macao permanent residents to furnish arrival/departure cards. According to our discussions with the Macao side, we understand that these measures will be reciprocated by the Macao SAR Government. We envisage that these measures will be implemented from the second half of 2009 following further expert discussions between the two sides on implementation details.

6. In other words, we intend to allow Macao permanent residents to visit Hong Kong solely on strength of their Macao permanent identity cards, without the need to furnish Declaration Forms for Holders of Macao SAR Permanent Resident Identity Card to Hong Kong SAR. We aim to implement this convenience arrangement for persons aged 16 or above from the second half of 2009. It may require legislative amendments to waive similar requirement for those below 16. We wish to consult the Security Panel on the legal considerations within the 2008/09 legislative session.

7. To allow longer stay of Macao visitors in Hong Kong, we intend to extend the limit of stay for Macao permanent residents as visitors from 14 days to 180 days; and non-permanent residents (holding Visit Permits for Residents of Macao SAR to Hong Kong SAR) from 14 days to 30 days. These measures can be implemented by early 2009.

On-going Initiatives

Continuing to pursue measures to facilitate the movement of people and goods across the boundary, with a view to maintaining Hong Kong's competitiveness. These include the provision of self-service immigration clearance to frequent visitors, and developing a "Road Cargo System" that provides the electronic infrastructure for facilitating customs clearance of road cargoes as well as the movement of transshipment cargoes that involve inter-modal transfer (e.g. from land to air)

8. To facilitate movement of people across the boundary, we have, since May 2008, extended self-service immigration clearance at the airport to three types of frequent visitors, namely holders of Travel Passes issued by Immigration Department, Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Business Travel Card with the economy code "HKG" or Frequent Visitor Card issued by the Hong Kong Airport Authority. Up to end September 2008, about 8 000 frequent visitors have enrolled for use of e-Channels. We will continue to promote the initiative.

Undertaking the necessary legislative and administrative measures with a view to reducing the coverage of the Frontier Closed Area

9. The Frontier Closed Area (FCA) is an integral part of the security measures for maintaining the integrity of the boundary between Hong Kong and the Mainland and for combating illegal immigration and other cross-boundary illegal activities. Following consultation with the local community and relevant bodies, we announced in January 2008 to substantially reduce the land area of the FCA from about 2 800 hectares to about 400 hectares. Under the finalized plan of reducing the coverage of the FCA, all the land south of the existing boundary patrol road, together with the Lok Ma Chau Loop, Hoo Hok Wai and two patches of land located northwest of Lin Ma Hang Village and north of Pak Fu Shan respectively will be excluded from the FCA.

10. In general, to safeguard the security of the reduced FCA, we shall construct a secondary boundary fence along the existing boundary patrol road to ensure that the boundary patrol road and the existing primary boundary fence are protected from interference. New sections of the boundary patrol road, with a primary and a secondary boundary fence

constructed along its two edges, will also be constructed at certain parts of the new boundary.

11. We plan to put in place the new FCA in phases so that the land could be released for development as soon as possible. The first two sections of the new FCA boundary, covering the areas from Mai Po to the Lok Ma Chau Control Point and from Lin Ma Hang to Sha Tau Kok respectively, will be implemented around the end of 2010 upon completion of the construction of the secondary boundary fence at these sections. We will brief the Security Panel on the scope and estimated costs of the works involved in due course, and we aim to seek funding approval from Finance Committee in the second half of the 2008/09 legislative session.

Continuing the study on long-term options for better meeting demands for emergency ambulance services

12. In view of the increasing demand for emergency ambulance services (EAS), we have been examining various options to ensure that our EAS can continue to meet the demand effectively. To better utilize the EAS, we have stepped up publicity to promote the appropriate use of EAS, and we are studying the feasibility of introducing a medical priority dispatch system in Hong Kong. In addition, we will continue to review the deployment of resources for EAS in light of the latest service needs.

Continuing with intelligence-based and proactive strategy in combating illegal employment

13. The Government has been taking a three-pronged approach to combat illegal employment by tackling the problem at source; ensuring effective law enforcement; and stepping up publicity and education. The Immigration Department has a mechanism to pass the particulars of Mainland visitors found working illegally in Hong Kong to the Mainland authorities. This helps ensure closer scrutiny of any subsequent applications of those visitors for entry into Hong Kong. The local Government departments also regularly exchange information and coordinate enforcement efforts in combating illegal employment. The Government will continue to actively carry out publicity programmes against illegal employment, encourage reports, and remind members of the public the consequences of hiring illegal workers.

Implementing a series of initial measures that can be put in place in the short to medium term and formulating long-term, holistic and sustainable policies and measures to tackle the youth drug abuse problem, following the steer of the Task Force on Youth Drug Abuse led by the Secretary for Justice

14. In view of the rising trend of psychotropic substance abuse among the youth, the Chief Executive announced in his 2007 Policy Address the appointment of the Secretary for Justice to lead a high level inter-departmental task force to tackle the youth drug abuse problem.

15. The Task Force on Youth Drug Abuse has since been reviewing and mapping out strategies and measures covering the five prongs of our anti-drug policy – preventive education and publicity, treatment and rehabilitation, legislation and law enforcement, research, and external cooperation, and engaged the stakeholders through the fight crime and anti-drug networks to gather views. Given the pressing nature of the problem, the Task Force has earlier devised a series of initial measures that are being implemented, with an additional allocation of \$53 million in 2008/09. A two-year territory-wide anti-drug campaign and the “Path Builders” initiative have been launched to foster a drug-free youth culture and to mobilise various sectors of the community in caring for our young people.

16. The Task Force will shortly publish a report on holistic and sustainable policies and measures for the long term. We will also consult the Security Panel as soon as possible on the recommendations in the report, including measures in the medium to long term and increase in the manpower provision of the Security Bureau.

Continuing the promotion of various talent admission schemes and reviewing their application procedures from time to time

17. To meet the challenges of a knowledge-based economy and enhance the international competitiveness of Hong Kong, the Government endeavours to attract talent from around the world, including from the Mainland. On the immigration front, the Immigration Department has been actively taking a complementary role by adopting liberal and facilitating measures. Since the reunification, over 230 000 overseas and

Mainland talent have been admitted for working or residing in Hong Kong. The Government will continue to make use of the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Offices around the world to step up promotion of the schemes, and to review the relevant arrangements to meet the changing needs of our society.

18. The Task Group on Attracting Talent under the Commission on Strategic Development released a report in April 2008. Among other things, it recommends allowing employers to recruit upper-middle level executives and professionals from other territories without going through the requirement to prove that the job vacancies cannot be filled by local labour. Taking into consideration the need to strike a balance between facilitating the entry of talent and protecting the interest of local labour, we will put up a proposal on how to further streamline the admission arrangements for the employment of talent and professionals, and consult the Panel on Security and the Panel on Manpower on the proposal early.

Continuing to ensure that our legislative regime for combating terrorism is current and meets the need of changing circumstances

19. We are committed to combating terrorism and terrorist financing. To this end, we enacted the United Nations (Anti-Terrorism Measures) Ordinance (Cap. 575) in July 2002 and the United Nations (Anti-Terrorism Measures) (Amendment) Ordinance 2004 in July 2004 to implement the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1373 and some of the Special Recommendations of the Financial Action Task Force on Money Laundering. Some of the provisions in Cap. 575 concerning, for instance, freezing and forfeiture of terrorist property as well as law enforcement power, may only enter into operation when the accompanying rules of court and code of practice are in place. We are finalizing these rules of court and code of practice, and we will consult the Security Panel shortly before promulgating them.

Continuing to seek long-term solutions to address the problems of outdated facilities and overcrowding in some of our penal institutions

20. The new Lo Wu Correctional Institutions are expected to commence operation in 2010. We are also planning to redevelop the institutions in Chi Ma Wan. Apart from providing additional penal places,

the proposed new institutions will also provide rehabilitative facilities that are more suited to today's needs, so as to facilitate more effective rehabilitation for offenders.

Working in tandem with the Independent Police Complaints Council to prepare for the early and continued effective operation of the Council as a statutory body following the enactment of the Independent Police Complaints Council Ordinance

21. The Independent Police Complaints Council Ordinance, which establishes the existing Independent Police Complaints Council (IPCC) as a statutory body, was enacted by the Legislative Council in July 2008. We plan to commence the Ordinance in the first half of 2009 upon completion of the critical preparatory arrangements for the IPCC to operate as a statutory body. The commencement of the IPCC Ordinance will mark an important step in further enhancing the independent operation of the IPCC and the transparency of our police complaint system.

Continuing discussions with the Mainland and other jurisdictions on bilateral co-operation relating to Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters, Surrender of Fugitive Offenders and Transfer of Sentenced Persons

22. Hong Kong is committed to international cooperation in combating serious crimes. We will continue to extend our network of bilateral agreements with other jurisdictions on mutual legal assistance in criminal matters (MLA), surrender of fugitive offenders (SFO) and transfer of sentenced persons (TSP). To date, Hong Kong has signed 25 agreements on MLA, 17 agreements on SFO, and 10 agreements on TSP with other jurisdictions.

23. Our agreement with France on TSP came into force in May 2008. We signed three MLA agreements with Indonesia, Japan and Sri Lanka respectively in April to June 2008. We are preparing the necessary subsidiary legislation to implement these MLA agreements as soon as possible.

24. We will continue our discussions with the Mainland on the rendition and TSP arrangements.

Continuing to implement the Risks and Needs Assessment Protocol to identify prisoners prone to custodial and re-offending risks, and to deliver rehabilitative programmes matching their needs, with a view to more effectively reducing re-offending

25. The Risks and Needs Assessment Protocol is a scientific and evidence-based approach to prison management and offender rehabilitation. Since the implementation of the Protocol in October 2006, more than 6 000 offenders have undergone re-offending risks and rehabilitative needs assessments. CSD will further enhance the risks and needs assessment of offenders and delivery of various matching rehabilitative programmes, with a view to more effectively reducing the chance of re-offending by prisoners.

Security Bureau
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