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Panel on Security

**Background brief prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat
for the special meeting on 27 January 2010**

Crime situation in Hong Kong

Purpose

This paper summarizes past discussions by the Panel on Security (the Panel) on the crime situation in Hong Kong.

Deliberations of the Panel on Security

2. It is the practice of the Panel to discuss the crime situation in Hong Kong at the beginning of each year.
3. In the past five years, during the course of discussing Hong Kong's overall crime situation at the meetings of the Panel on 24 January 2005, 24 January 2006, 25 January 2007, 31 January 2008 and 21 January 2009, members expressed concern over a number of issues. Members were particularly concerned about police conduct and integrity, and the increasing number of cases relating to domestic violence, cyber crime, criminal intimidation in debt collection and youth drug abuse.

Police conduct and integrity

4. Some members referred to a reported case in which a Police officer was alleged to have raped a young woman inside a Police station (who was later found guilty and sentenced to 12 years of imprisonment). They remarked that the incident had aroused wide public concern about the management and security of Police stations and tarnished the reputation of the Police Force. They called on the Police to take immediate actions to address the matter, and added that measures should be taken to restore and enhance the public confidence in the Police Force (the Force), in particular, the conduct and integrity of Police officers.

5. The Police responded that the case, albeit serious, was an isolated incident. The Force was fully committed to upholding a high standard of conduct and discipline among all officers, and had in place a well-established and effective system to deal with any breach of discipline. Where misconduct or non-compliance with the Police's internal procedures was involved, disciplinary action would be instituted against the officer concerned. Where criminal offences were involved, the Police would bring him to justice. The Police placed great emphasis on the integrity of its members. Integrity, as one of the core values of the Force, played a central role in the inculcation of trainees and featured prominently in police training throughout the career of Police officers.

6. Some members expressed concern about Police officers committing criminal offences and its adverse impact on the Force's reputation. A member suggested that the annual report on Hong Kong's law and order situation should include the figures and overall trend of the crimes committed by Police officers. They queried about the personal qualities and conduct of Police officers.

7. The Police responded that it had taken the following measures to foster correct values and good conduct among Police officers -

- (a) the Force management fully recognized the stress associated with police work and had been taking positive actions to assist Police officers to cope with stress and to seek professional care when necessary. Besides counselling services for Police officers with psychological problems, the Police promoted a healthy lifestyle among Police officers through a variety of activities such as sports, recreation, voluntary work, and physical fitness and health management. It encouraged officers to lead a normal family life and to keep away from bad habits, such as gambling, so that they would be in a better position to handle pressure generated from their work. As the unique nature and demanding requirement of police duties created great pressure on Police officers, the Police planned to strengthen its Psychological Services Group shortly by the creation of one additional post of Police Clinical Psychologist so as to provide a better service to Police officers in need;
- (b) the Police had arranged a wide range of training courses through welfare officers or training and staff relation officers so as to, on the one hand, help Police officers to face high-pressure work, and on the other hand, help the middle management of the Force as supervisory officers to be alert to the conditions of their subordinates. The supervisory officers would maintain a close watch over their subordinates' performance and behaviour, e.g. frequent requests for leave, so as to assess whether the latter were under stress or were encountering psychological or financial problems;

- (c) the Police was considering the implementation of psychometric tests on new recruits in order to assess whether the applicants were suitable in terms of their personality traits and personal values;
- (d) the Police also attached great importance to ensuring that Police officers had the correct values and ethics. In addition to its existing training programmes for Police officers instilling the Force's values, the Force would continue to allocate resources to implement a number of projects with a view to enhancing the standard of ethics, probity and integrity among officers. In particular, a Force Committee on Integrity Management (FCIM) would be established to review and coordinate the Force's policies on officers' conduct. It would also be responsible for implementing the Force's integrity management strategies such as education, prevention and supervision, with emphasis placed on leadership and individual responsibility; and
- (e) to take forward the initiatives to enhance Police officers' awareness and understanding of the Force's values and to strengthen the professionalism of the Force, FCIM to be established within the Force would be chaired by the Deputy Commissioner (Management) with major Formation Commanders from Policy Wings and Regions as members. A Formation Integrity Officer would be appointed in all Police Districts to be responsible for implementing departmental policies on integrity management.

Domestic violence

8. Some members expressed concern about a substantial increase in domestic violence cases in 2007. A member indicated that although there was a decrease in such cases in 2008, she was concerned whether there would be an upward pressure on this type of crime in the following year, and enquired about the measures to be taken by the Police in tackling such crimes.

9. The Police advised that it had invested resources in handling domestic violence cases including the deployment of a Police officer at Sergeant level or above to supervise initial police action at the scene and ensure that each case was handled appropriately according to the guidelines, and the designation of a Superintendent at the Police's headquarters to oversee domestic violence issues. The Police's work in the area aimed at providing protection for victims, making referral to appropriate parties for follow-up, and conducting investigation and instituting prosecution against abusers.

10. The Police, the Social Welfare Department (SWD) and non-government organizations (NGOs) had established mechanisms for communication and liaison in handling domestic violence. Where necessary, multi-disciplinary case conferences would be conducted by caseworkers, and subject to individual case, representatives

from the Police (police officers-in-charge of investigation) and the professionals concerned would be invited to attend the meeting to share information on the case and work together in formulating the most appropriate welfare plans for the victims and their families. In May 2008, the Police implemented a new protocol of Victim Management for victims of serious domestic violence crime cases which was further expanded in January 2009 to victims of non-serious crime and non-crime high-threat domestic violence cases with a view to strengthening the support and safety assurance to victims throughout the case enquiry and legal proceedings, and to enhance communication and collaboration with SWD and NGOs. It was noteworthy that the Police had since the end of 2008 adopted further measures to improve the Central Domestic Violence Database (CDVD). Apart from information on domestic violence cases and other related cases such as Child Abuse, Elder Abuse and Missing Person reports, the enhanced CDVD also electronically captured reports of Domestic Incident, and Family Violence Crime cases in relation to the familial relationships covered under the Domestic Violence (Amendment) Ordinance 2008. Officers-in-charge of investigation would be able to have better overall assessments.

11. The Police added that the public's increased awareness of the need to report domestic violence cases to the Police as well as an increase in confidence in seeking help from the Police or other authorities concerned might encourage more victims to report their cases to the Police.

Cyber crime

12. Regarding the measures adopted by the Police to combat cyber crime, the Police advised that the Police's Technology Crime Division was responsible for combating cyber crime and conducting cyber patrol. A number of seminars relating to security on the web had been held with the information technology professionals of major organizations and enterprises.

Criminal intimidation

13. Some members asked about the reason for the increase in the number of criminal intimidation cases in 2007, and whether there was any new element attributing to the increase.

14. The Police responded that over 50% of 1 960 criminal intimidation cases in 2007 were due to disputes arising from private relationships and money matters, whereas 389 cases were related to debt collection, representing a decrease of 5 cases over 2006. The Police added that only 2.8% of the total crime cases were related to triad activities. There was no indication of any new element contributing to the increase in criminal intimidation cases. Owing to the nature of such crimes, only 5.4% of the total cases were detected in 2007.

Youth drug abuse

15. Some members asked about the new measures that would be taken to tackle the problem of young persons abusing drugs in schools, engaging in drug retail activities, and crossing the boundary to abuse drugs.

16. The Police responded that it was very concerned about drug abuse problem. The Narcotics Bureau had been established at the Police's headquarters and special duty squads were deployed in each Police district and Police region to combat the problem. The use of drug detector dogs of Customs and Excise Department (C&E) at boundary control points had strengthened deterrence against drug trafficking.

17. As for young persons engaging in cross-boundary drug abuse, the Police pointed out that it had provided the Mainland counterparts with intelligence on the movement of drug retail outlets. A four-month large scale anti-narcotics campaign launched by the Mainland authorities in 2007 had effectively deterred young persons from engaging in cross-boundary drug abuse.

18. The Administration advised that there was a serious and increasing trend of youth drug abuse, particularly in ketamine, in 2008. The Police had taken the following steps to address the issue -

- (a) a high level inter-departmental task force led by the Secretary for Justice was formed in 2007 to consolidate strategies to combat the problem. In November 2008, the Task Force on Youth Drug Abuse (the Task Force) published its report which set out some 70 recommendations to combat youth drug abuse in a holistic and sustainable manner. The Task Force recommended strengthening the five prongs of the anti-drug strategy, namely, preventive education and publicity, treatment and rehabilitation, legislation and law enforcement, external cooperation, and research;
- (b) in respect of education and publicity, the focus of the Police was on reducing the demand for illicit drugs by imparting knowledge on drugs to different stakeholders, dispelling any misconceptions, strengthening young people's life skills and resistance to adversity and temptations, and mobilizing the whole community to join the anti-drug cause. The school sector was an important platform for enhancing such efforts;
- (c) among others, the School Liaison Officer (SLO) Scheme was an integral part of the community policing strategy to assist schools in preventing young people from falling prey to crime and involving in drug or crime activities. All the SLOs under the scheme were officers at Sergeant rank; they served all primary and secondary schools in the territory under the supervision of the Police Community Relations Officers (PCROs) in their respective districts. SLOs paid regular visits to

schools and organized anti-drug and fight crime seminars from time to time in collaboration with the school community, including teachers, school social workers and school youth organizations, to enhance the knowledge of students on the harmful effects of drugs and other juvenile crimes. For youth who had dropped out of school, PCROs and NGOs would also visit premises frequented by young people, including entertainment venues and game centres, to reach out to a wider spectrum of young people to disseminate anti-drug messages;

- (d) in respect of external cooperation, the Police had implemented comprehensive strategies for combating drug trafficking activities. It also worked closely with anti-drug agencies in the Mainland and overseas to tackle transnational drug traffickers and intercept drugs at their origins;
- (e) on legislation and law enforcement, the Police would apply to the Court for enhanced sentences in the cases involving the exploitation of young people for committing drug offences. In addition, the Police would conduct joint operations with other law enforcement agencies, including the Immigration Department and C&E, against the trafficking of drugs into Hong Kong via the boundary. In 2008, 70 Hong Kong people were arrested for cross-boundary drug trafficking with a total of 35 kilograms of various drugs seized;
- (f) the Police had been cracking down hard on the establishments which allowed young people to take drugs. As a result, a few entertainment venues in Kowloon West closed down in the 10 odd months preceding January 2009; and
- (g) the Police had also strengthened cyber patrols to combat activities related to the supply of drugs. Extra Police resources had been deployed to commence the cyber patrol.

Relevant papers

19. Members may wish to refer to the following minutes of meetings for details of the discussions -

- (a) minutes of meeting of the Panel on Security on 24 January 2005 (LC Paper No. CB(2)929/04-05);
- (b) minutes of special meeting of the Panel on Security on 24 January 2006 (LC Paper No. CB(2)2059/05-06);

- (c) minutes of meeting of the Panel on Security on 25 January 2007 (LC Paper No. CB(2)1177/06-07);
- (d) minutes of special meeting of the Panel on Security on 31 January 2008 (LC Paper No. CB(2)1777/07-08); and
- (e) minutes of special meeting of the Panel on Security on 21 January 2009 (LC Paper No. CB(2)1497/08-09).

20. The above minutes are available on the website of the Legislative Council (<http://www.legco.gov.hk>).

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