

Special Meeting of the Finance Committee on 21 March 2000

Presentation by the Secretary for Constitutional Affairs

Implementation and Promotion of the Understanding of the Basic Law

One of the important tasks of the Constitutional Affairs Bureau (CAB) is to facilitate and advise other bureaux and departments of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government (HKSARG) on the implementation of the Basic Law in their respective areas of work in accordance with the established policies. This year marks the 10th anniversary of the promulgation of the Basic Law. Relevant government bureaux and departments as well as non-government organizations have organized various activities to commemorate this significant and historic moment.

Developing Relationship with the CPG and other Mainland Authorities

2. Another major task of CAB is to develop and maintain a cordial and constructive working relationship with the Central People's Government (CPG) and other Mainland authorities in accordance with the principle of 'One Country, Two Systems'.

3. Statistics show that official contacts between the HKSARG and the Mainland authorities further increased during the past year. The year 1999 recorded a total of 2 627 official visiting delegations to and from the Mainland, representing an increase of 29% over that of 1998. Many departments of the HKSARG have established direct contact with their Mainland counterparts. The various exchanges between the two sides have not only enhanced mutual

understanding, but have also laid a solid foundation for cooperation in many areas of work.

The Working Relationship between the HKSARG and the MFA Office

4. CAB also acts as a focal point of contact between the HKSARG and the Office of the Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in HKSAR (the MFA Office). Over the past two years, we have established a good and effective communication channel with the MFA Office. We will continue to maintain a close working relationship with the Office and assist various government bureaux and departments in handling HKSAR's external affairs in accordance with the Basic Law.

Electoral Issues

5. On the electoral front, we propose to provide the Registration and Electoral Office (REO) with a provision of about \$406 million in the financial year 2000-2001. This amount is made up of \$61 million for personal emoluments, \$10.5 million for departmental expenses and \$334.5 million for election expenses.

6. To prepare for and to conduct the Election Committee sub-sector elections as well as the general election of the second term Legislative Council, the REO needs to set aside provision for creating about 140 additional civil service posts of different duration and employing about 480 non civil servants on contract basis.

7. Apart from the expenses incurred in employing additional staff, the other major component of expenditure is the expenses for publicity. To encourage registered voters to vote in the elections, we will launch a series of district-based and territory-wide publicity programmes. We will also set aside provision for candidates to mail, free of charge, their election advertisements to registered voters.

8. The last major component of expenditure goes to the expenses for the elections themselves, including the expenditure on hiring more than 10 000 polling and counting staff, and the expenses on renting and fitting out the premises for polling and counting.

Constitutional Affairs Bureau

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