

Presentation to the Finance Committee of Legislative Council

by the Secretary for Home Affairs

on 22 March 2000 at 3:05 p.m.

Home Affairs Bureau is responsible under Head 53 for six Programmes, namely (1) Rights of the Individual; (2) Information Policy; (3) District and Community Relations; (4) Youth Development; (5) Recreation, Sport and Entertainment Licensing and (6) Culture. Because of the constraint of time, I will specifically talk about 3 of them today and they are Setting up of the Leisure and Cultural Services Department, Rural Public Works Programme and Urban Minor Works Programme, and Building Management.

Setting up of the Leisure and Cultural Services Department

2. The setting up of the Leisure and Cultural Services Department marks an important milestone in the Government's provision of leisure and cultural services. The new department is committed to ensuring that the quality of its services is maintained at a high standard, and that the services are delivered in an efficient and cost-effective manner.

3. We will be working closely with the District Councils to identify the needs of the community and provide services to cater for their needs. In addition, the Department will set up Customer Liaison Groups at major leisure and cultural venues to improve communication with our customers and to solicit their views on how our services could be further improved. We will also strengthen our cooperation with various local organizations in promoting the development of leisure and cultural activities.

4. In delivering our services, we will take full advantage of information technology. The 68 public libraries run by the Department will be served by a new territory-wide computer system at the end of this year. The new system will enable readers to have easy access to our library system and to return books to any of the libraries in the territory. Apart from providing digital library services at the new Hong Kong Central Library and the district libraries, we will be enhancing the provision of multi-media facilities such as CD-ROM and internet searches in these libraries. In addition, we are actively exploring means to improve the present booking system (URBTIX) by way of modern technology and also the feasibility of privatizing the service.

5. Quality service can be provided only when there is quality service management. The Department has embarked on a programme to develop its service culture by enhancing the service attitude and skills of its staff. A series of training programmes have already been organised for front-line staff who need to come into daily contact with members of the public.

6. In line with Government's policy on the Enhanced Productivity Programme, we will contract out our services based on the principle of cost-effectiveness. As a matter of fact, we have already contracted out the security service of our buildings and the cleansing service of most of our parks and recreational facilities.

7. The New Millennium is a significant landmark in the development of our cultural services. Apart from the setting up of the Culture and Heritage Commission, a number of major venues and facilities will be opened. They include the Hong Kong Heritage Museum, the Hong Kong Museum of History, the Hong Kong Museum of Coastal Defence, the Hong Kong Film Archive, the Hong Kong Central Library and the Yuen Long Theatre. We have earmarked resources to cover the costs of overheads and staff to run the services. We have the responsibility to see that the facilities are properly managed, and that the public can get value for money in their appreciation of our heritage, arts and culture.

Rural Public Works Programme and Urban Minor Works Programme

Rural Public Works Programme

8. Building on the success of the Rural Planning and Improvement Strategy Minor Works Programme which will formally come to an end on 31.3.2000, we have, in 1999-2000, launched a Rural Public Works (RPW) Programme to continue minor improvement works in the rural areas. We will continue our efforts in upgrading the living environment of the rural areas and in 2000-01, \$100m will be spent on RPW projects. With the co-operation and support of the Heung Yee Kuk and local residents in N.T., we are sure that the rural environment will continue to improve.

Urban Minor Works Programme

9. To enhance the role of the District Councils in advising on and monitoring the delivery of municipal service, we will introduce an Urban Minor Works (UMW) Programme for the purposes of improving the local environment and eliminating hygiene blackspots. The UMW Programme mirrors the RPW Programme mentioned earlier will replace the Urban Environmental Improvement Programme which has a limited project scope. In 2000-01, we will spend \$35m on projects such as amenity plantings, repaving of footpaths and construction of sitting-out-areas in urban areas.

Building Management

10. Management and maintenance of private buildings are the responsibility of property owners. Some owners have not carried out their responsibilities resulting in their buildings having safety problems. The Building Management (Amendment) Bill 2000 was introduced into this Council for second reading on 26.1.2000. The Bill contains the following two major proposals, namely -

- (a) to promulgate a Code of Practice on building management and maintenance for compliance by owners' corporations; and
- (b) to introduce a mandatory management scheme for buildings with serious management and maintenance problems.

11. I look forward to the satisfactory conclusion of the Bills Committee's examination of the Bill so that it could be enacted within this legislative session for implementation.

Conclusion

12. The above only covers three of the many areas of work undertaken by HAB. Members are welcomed to raise questions, if any, about these three or other areas of work within HAB's responsibilities. My colleagues and I will try our best to provide you with the answers. Thank you.