

Presentation to the Finance Committee of Legislative Council
by the Secretary for Home Affairs
on 29 March 2004 at 11:30 am

Mr Chairman,

Introduction

First of all, I would like to thank Members for their interest in the draft Estimates of the Home Affairs Bureau (HAB). HAB is responsible for a diversified policy portfolio and is committed to improving the quality of life of people in Hong Kong and building a vibrant, caring and harmonious community. It steers the work of Home Affairs Department and Leisure and Cultural Services Department whilst facilitating the work of many non-governmental organizations. Before Members raise questions, I would like to highlight our priority areas in the new financial year. These include measures to address gambling-related problems, youth development, civic education and creative industries.

Measures to address gambling-related problems

2. Gambling-related problems are long standing problems. We have implemented the following preventive and remedial measures to address gambling-related problems—

- Last year, we set up the Ping Wo Fund to finance preventive and remedial measures to address gambling-related problems;
- We have launched a public education programme aimed at warning the public against excessive gambling and to enhance the public

understanding of problem and pathological gambling. The messages are publicized through TV and radio API, TV docu-drama and posters. We would continue to implement the public education programme this year;

- We have commissioned the Hong Kong Education City to launch an education programme targeting adolescents. The project, known as “Say No to Gambling” Action, is a two-year programme which seeks to enhance the understanding of adolescents, parents and teachers towards gambling, and to strengthen the ability of adolescents to exercise self-control so as to prevent themselves from becoming addicted to, or developing compulsive or pathological behaviour in any activity, including gambling. The project includes a central website, and the organization of different activities such as workshops, seminars and debating competition. In the coming months, we are planning to launch a special youth empowerment project aimed at engaging young people to drive home amongst their peers clear messages about gambling-related problems; and
- Two dedicated counselling and treatment centres for problem and pathological gamblers operated by Caritas and Tung Wah Group of Hospitals respectively commenced operation last October. We will soon commission a university to conduct an evaluative study of the effectiveness of the services provided by the two centres.
- We plan to commission an independent institute to conduct a study on the Hong Kong people’s participation in gambling activities. The study seeks to assess the impact of gambling participation and keep track of the prevalence of problem and pathological gambling

in Hong Kong.

Youth Development

3. In view of the rapid developments in the society and advances in information technology, we believe that the role of young people should not be confined to “service recipients”, or “future leaders” of the society, but also “current active participants in community development”. We would continue to examine the following fundamental questions with the Commission on Youth (COY) and other relevant stakeholders of youth development–

- Our community’s expectations of young people;
- What young people expect and demand on our society; and
- How the society could provide the suitable environment, support and opportunities for youth so as to facilitate both the development of young people and that of the community as a whole.

4. The Government attaches much importance to enhancing the social participation by the youth, and considers it a core element of the youth development programmes. In the coming year, we are planning to promote social participation of youth through the following measures–

- We have, in co-operation with COY, commissioned a local university to conduct the first-ever benchmarking survey on “Civic Engagement and Social Networks of Youth in Hong Kong”, which aims at identifying young people’s expectations and views on social participation, and establishing a baseline for future studies on civic engagement and social networking of youth; and
- We would examine, in conjunction with COY, how best to re-

establish “Youth Councils”, which aims at providing opportunities for young people to acquire the culture and skills of handling public affairs through structured participation in discussion of public issues (especially those directly related to them). This would also assist the Government in tapping the views of young people, thereby increasing the accountability of the policy formulation process. We hope to work with youth organizations and youth workers to devise a feasible proposal of “Youth Councils” which is conducive to youth development and social participation.

5. We would continue to provide recurrent subventions to ten uniformed youth groups for the purpose of subsidizing their diversified, beneficial and systematic training programmes for the holistic development of young people. We would strengthen our connections with these uniformed groups to ensure that their wide-ranging programmes could also effectively address the growth and developmental needs of young people.

Civic Education

6. We have, in consultation with the Committee on the Promotion of Civic Education (CPCE), recently reviewed the future direction of our work in promoting civic education outside schools. We have decided to focus our efforts towards the promotion of good civic values of a civil society (both at the individual and corporate levels), targeting especially the working population and young adults. With this direction in mind, we are implementing the following measures this year—

- We are exploring how best to promote the concept of “corporate citizenship” or “corporate social responsibility”. Our purpose is

to instill in corporations the sense of civic awareness and social responsibility in different aspects. We consider that this would be conducive to the promotion of the same civic values amongst individual citizens; and

- CPCE has selected “Social Participation and Commitment” as the theme of the Community Participation Scheme in 2004, instead of following the past practice of subsidizing a wide and diverse range of programmes. The aim is to encourage public participation in community building, and to foster the sense of mutual trust, mutual aid and reciprocity in the community, thereby enhancing social cohesion and harmony.

7. Promoting the sense of cultural and national identity has been part of our efforts in promoting civic education. We would continue to work with CPCE, through a series of promotional activities, to fortify the sense of cultural and national identity amongst the public. These activities would include seminars, interactive drama, producing publications, teaching kits and animation series.

8. Promoting the Basic Law at the community level is another important area of our work in promoting civic education. We are planning to organize, amongst others, the “Basic Law Speech Contest” in 2004, which aims at enhancing public understanding of the provisions of the Basic Law, and hence the sense of belonging and commitment to the society and the motherland.

Creative Industries

9. The primary role of the HKSAR Government in promoting creative industries is to improve the business environment, safeguard free economy, encourage investments from local and foreign business sectors, and bring about the partnership of “creative talents” and “entrepreneurs”. In this respect, the

tasks of HAB are as follows—

- To promote the creative industries of Hong Kong to local, overseas and foreign business communities proactively in order to stimulate investments;
- To promote cultural links with the Pearl River Delta, Asian region as well as the international community through introducing and building a platform for communication;
- To enhance the provision of more public arts and cultural events, providing more chances for the public to be nurtured and gain creative inspirations from daily life; and
- To make reference to the “Baseline Study on Hong Kong’s Creative Industries” published last year by the Central Policy Unit and other relevant studies to further explore the development of creative industries.

10. In the past one year, HAB organized a series of public workshops to generate community interests and awareness on creative industries. We also organized the “Hong Kong Cultural Industries Expo”, “Asia Cultural Co-operation Forum”, “International Symposium on Art and Public Space” and “Pearl River Delta Cultural Co-operation Meeting”. The above initiatives formed the basis for enhancing arts education, nurturing creative talents, liaising the cultural sector and enterprises and promoting regional partnerships.

11. Looking ahead this year, we will sustain the above efforts by organizing the following activities—

- An year-long “Youth Creativity Employment Programme” to provide experimental grounds and opportunities for young people to venture in enterprising;
- Talks and promotional activities to help local creative industries understand and optimize the funding resources provided by the Government;
- More activities to promote arts and creativity such as the “Arts and Creativity Festival” to enrich the life and cultural tastes of the public;
- The second Asia Cultural Co-operation Forum to foster cultural links with Asian countries in cultural industries; and
- An international symposium and exhibition “New Trends in Architecture” to enhance the understanding and alertness of the public towards city planning and aesthetics of architecture.
- Sustain our efforts to facilitate the implementation of Local Community Economy (LCE) projects. New initiatives in the pipeline include “Aberdeen Dining on Sampan”, “Café at Lantau Link View Point”, “Fun in Sai Kung with Waterfront Park Cuisine Carnival”, the “Hong Kong Computer and Communication Festival 2004”, etc. Apart from stimulating domestic economy and promoting tourism, these projects also provide platforms to showcase Hong Kong’s creative business ideas and talents and create employment opportunities.

Conclusion

12. Mr Chairman, I have just outlined some of our main tasks in the coming year. My colleagues and I will be pleased to answer any questions Members may have on these or other areas of our work. Thank you.