

Speaking Notes for S for S
at the Special FC Meeting on 5 March 2012

Chairman,

- In the draft Estimates for the new financial year (2012-13), the allocation on the security policy area group is \$34.3 billion, representing 8.7% of the total government expenditure. The two policy areas of Internal Security and Immigration Control under my responsibility will account for \$29.7 billion.

Law and Order

- The overall law and order situation in Hong Kong remained stable in 2011. The overall crime figure was about the same as the level in 2010, whilst the violent crime figure registered a decrease of 3.3% as compared with 2010. Most categories of crimes — such as all robberies, burglaries, criminal intimidation, wounding and serious assault, rape, indecent assault, missing motor vehicles, as well as serious narcotics offences — also decreased in number. Overall speaking, the law and order situation of Hong Kong has remained stable. The Police will as always remain alert to maintain the law and order of our society.
- The major operational targets of the Commissioner of Police for 2012 are to combat violent crimes, triads syndicated and organised crimes, dangerous drugs, “quick-cash” crimes, technology crimes, and to maintain professionalism in handling public order events and counter terrorism work.

- The Police will also create 98 new posts mainly for strengthening operational capability, increasing the manpower of the Police College, supporting traffic enforcement actions and combating technology crimes.

Manpower resources of the Customs and Excise Department

- In the 2012-13 Budget, Government has earmarked resources for creating new posts in the Customs and Excise Department (C&ED) with a view to handling the additional duties. These include the creation of 70 posts for providing cargo clearance services in the new air cargo terminal at the Hong Kong International Airport. Separately, in order to prepare for the commissioning of the Kai Tak Cruise Terminal in mid-2013, 42 posts will be created within C&ED. In view of the increase in the number of cross-boundary passengers, additional passenger channels will be provided at Lok Ma Chau Control Point. As such, C&ED will create 26 posts to handle the related customs clearance work for passengers.

Control Points and e-Channel Service

- To maintain Hong Kong's status as an international trade and tourism hub, the Immigration Department (ImmD) has all along strived to provide a smooth and effective immigration clearance service. The number of visitors arriving Hong Kong has continued to grow over the past few years. In 2011, the total number of visitor arrivals reached 41.9 million, representing a 16% increase from 2010. In particular, the number of visitor arrivals through land boundary control points has increased by 20% over the same period.

- ImmD has adopted a series of measures to cope with the passenger traffic. In the 2012-13 financial year, with a view to handling the rising number of visitors, there will be a net increase of 162 posts in ImmD, among which 93 of them will be deployed for carrying out immigration control duties at control points. We have commenced recruiting suitable candidates for these new posts and will provide suitable training for them as soon as possible. The newly created posts for various control points will be filled from April onwards.
- ImmD has also strived to increase its handling capacity and efficiency through strengthening its e-Channel service. Since January 2012, eligible Mainland frequent visitors may use the e-Channel service at Lo Wu and Lok Ma Chau Spur Line control points upon enrolment. As of early February 2012, over 430 000 movements through such e-Channel service was recorded, representing 6% of the total number of movements involving Mainland visitors. By mid-2012, ImmD will further extend the above service to China Ferry Terminal, Macau Ferry Terminal and Hong Kong International Airport control points. The total number of e-Channels for use by Mainland frequent visitors at the above control points will increase from 21 to 53 by then. As a greater portion of Mainland visitors will be using e-channels for clearance, this will help mitigate the passenger traffic pressure at the control points in the future.
- Besides, to augment the handling capacity of the existing boundary control points, we have commenced improvement works at Man Kam To and Lok Ma Chau control points in January and November 2011 respectively and the works are expected to complete on schedule by 2012 and 2013 respectively. After the completion of the works, the number of e-Channels to be installed at Man Kam To Control Point will increase from 9 to 18; and that of Lok Ma Chau Control Point from 20 to 43.

- Meanwhile, satisfactory progress has been made regarding the usage of e-Channels by other frequent visitors to Hong Kong. As at end of 2011, around 797 000 Hong Kong residents and 158 000 Macao residents had successfully enrolled for using the e-Channel service of the other side, whereas 68 000 foreign frequent visitors have enrolled for using the e-Channel service in Hong Kong.
- ImmD will flexibly deploy its staff resources to deal with rising cross-boundary passenger and vehicular flow and other immigration control duties including implementing the complementary immigration measures on non-local pregnant visitors. In the light of the trend of passenger traffic, ImmD will continue to review its manpower and resources requirements as required.

Individual Visit Scheme

- Since the implementation of the Individual Visit Scheme (IVS) in 2003, there have been more than 80 million visitor-arrivals to Hong Kong under the scheme as at January 2012, bringing considerable benefits to tourism, retailing and related sectors. Since 2010, the Mainland authority has further relaxed the applications by non-Guangdong residents in Shenzhen for “multiple journey individual visit exit endorsements valid for one year”. In January this year, there were more than 2 million visitor-arrivals under the IVS, a jump of 24% over the same period last year. ImmD has maintained close liaison with the tourism industry and the Mainland counterparts. ImmD will suitably recruit additional staff in 2012-13 in order to enhance its handling capacity for passengers and vehicles throughput.

Assistance to Hong Kong Residents Overseas

- We will continue to provide assistance to Hong Kong residents in distress outside Hong Kong. ImmD has comprehensively enhanced the “1868” hotline services in December 2010, such as increasing the number of the hotline from 23 to 46 and adding recording and automatic call distribution functions.
- ImmD launched the Registration of Outbound Travel Information service at the end of 2010 to enable Hong Kong residents to register their itineraries and contact details before departure. Residents may receive updated Outbound Travel Alert (OTA) information through appropriate means, including SMS on mobile phones, whilst travelling outside Hong Kong. ImmD may also contact registrants to render practical assistance in case of emergency. Since December 2011, the registrants can also receive the relevant information via their registered Internet email address.
- We will review the coverage of the OTA system regularly. Following two reviews in 2011, we have extended the coverage from 60 countries and regions to 85 in order to provide Hong Kong residents with information on the outbound travel safety risks of more places. The newly added places are popular tourist or business destinations for Hong Kong residents.

Screening Torture Claims

- The enhanced torture claim screening mechanism has been launched since end 2009. Claimants may receive publicly-funded legal assistance through the Duty Lawyer Service. Persons with a legal professional

background were appointed adjudicators to determine petition cases. So far, ImmD has made decision on over 1 400 claims.

- Last July, we introduced into the Legislative Council the Immigration (Amendment) Bill 2011, which establishes a statutory screening mechanism to ensure that torture claims will be decided in a fair and more effective manner. We will continue to work closely with LegCo on the scrutiny of the Bill, with a view to securing its smooth passage within the current legislative session thus facilitating early implementation of the statutory scheme.

Public Safety

- To enhance the protection of public safety, the Fire Services Department (FSD) will create about 200 additional posts in the new financial year. About 160 of them are mainly for additional fire station and to upgrade existing fire stations' standard in areas with high population growth and increased fire risks such as Lam Tin and Kowloon Bay, and to strengthen the department's work on procurement, logistics, and administration. The other 40 posts will add 6 ambulance shifts to cater for the service demand and strengthen the management of ambulance services.
- To ensure the safety of frontline personnel, FSD replaces fire services and ambulance equipment in a timely manner. The expenses on procurement of fire appliances, ambulances and major equipment, etc for 2012-13 are estimated to be around \$300 million.

- In terms of fire prevention, FSD will continue to promote a fire safety culture in collaboration with various sectors in the community. The department will continue to adopt a 4-pronged approach to enhance the fire safety of buildings through publicity, law enforcement, inspection and partnership with owners/occupiers and property management of buildings, and educate the public about the appropriate responses in case of a fire.
- After the No. 4 Alarm Fire at Fa Yuen Street last year, FSD has set up dedicated teams to investigate the cause of the fire and circumstances leading to multiple casualties. It also assists the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department in reviewing fire safety measures for hawker stalls.

Custody and Rehabilitation of Offenders

- The Correctional Services Department (CSD) has been implementing different measures to address the problems of ageing penal facilities and overcrowding in some of the correctional institutions. CSD will create 39 additional posts for the Lo Wu Correctional Institution in the new financial year to strengthen its management and ensure its security and smooth operation. CSD has also completed the conversion of Lai Chi Kok Correctional Institution into an annex facility of Lai Chi Kok Reception Centre. The annex facility will start operation this month to relieve the overcrowding situation of the Reception Centre. Furthermore, in 2012-13, the Department plans to embark on the partial redevelopment project of the Tai Lam Centre for Women, which includes increasing penal places and enhancing various facilities (for example, increasing the number of hospital beds and improving the visit rooms etc).

We will continue to explore other redevelopment projects and improvement works to address the problem of ageing facilities and meet the custodial and rehabilitative service needs of offenders.

- CSD will continue to take forward the Risks and Needs Assessment and Management Protocol for Offenders to enhance the assessment of their re-offending risks and needs and implement various matching rehabilitative programmes with a view to reducing their likelihood of re-offending more effectively. CSD will also strengthen the provision of suitable and market-oriented vocational training courses for inmates to improve their success rate in securing employment after release. The Department plans to provide about 1 310 training places to adult prisoners in 2012-13, which represents a year-on-year increase of about 2.3%. In addition, CSD will continue to appeal for community acceptance and support for rehabilitated offenders through public education and publicity activities.

Combating Drug Abuse Problem

- The concerted efforts of the Government, the anti-drug sector and the community in combating drug abuse problem have yielded positive achievements. Nonetheless, there are still major challenges in our anti-drug work, including emergence of new drugs and the highly hidden nature of taking psychotropic substances. We would need to continue to take forward anti-drug recommendations of the Task Force on Youth Drug Abuse along a five-pronged anti-drug strategy, namely preventive education and publicity, treatment and rehabilitation, legislation and law enforcement, research and external co-operation to consolidate our anti-drug work and make further inroads on the achievements made so far.

- The Government has repeatedly allocated new resources to support various anti-drug measures. Such measures in the last financial year include a 20% increase of professional manpower of school social work service to strengthen related counselling services; extending the on-site medical support services to two Centres of Drug Counselling; and increase in manpower to provide support to residential drug treatment and rehabilitation centres, with a view to enhancing the standards of the centres' facilities or carrying out redevelopment works.
- In 2012-13, the Social Welfare Department (SWD) will extend the pilot scheme on enhanced probation service for one year. Through more focused, intensive and structured treatment programmes, the Pilot Scheme will continue to help young offenders under the age of 21 convicted of drug-related offences to turn a new leaf. SWD will evaluate the effectiveness of the scheme and make recommendations on the way forward.

Chairman, this concludes my opening remarks. My colleagues and I will be happy to answer questions from Members.

Security Bureau

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