For discussion
27 February 2024

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Legislative Council Panel on Security

Major information technology projects
to continue enhancing digital policing

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Purpose

This paper briefs the Panel on the major information technology ("IT") projects launched by the Hong Kong Police Force ("HKPF") for the continuous expansion of Digital Policing and their latest developments.

Digital Policing

2. With the advancement of technology, the public's requirements and mode of service delivery of the HKPF have changed and their expectations have risen. In view of this, the HKPF has set "Digital Policing" as one of the Strategic Directions since 2019 to systematically enhance the HKPF's services through technology to cope with the needs of the developing society.

3. Under the Digital Policing initiative, the HKPF has launched a series of e-projects to optimise user experience, streamline internal operations and processes, and enhance criminal investigation capabilities, etc., and have achieved certain results and recognition, winning a number of awards in international and local competitions[1]. In line with the HKPF's people-oriented service concept, Digital Policing continuously optimises existing services and proposes new projects in response to changes in the policing environment, with a view to bringing convenience to the public and safeguarding public safety.

A. Bringing convenience to the public

Self-Service Kiosks ("SSKs")

4. Starting from September 2021, the HKPF has introduced in phases SSKs to enable members of the public and tourists to report loss of property on their own and to handle 14 other non-emergency services provided by the e-Report Centre, including the submission of crime reports, miscellaneous reports, traffic reports, etc. The SSKs can divert some of the reporting public in report rooms,

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[1] For example, the "Smart Search and Rescue Solution" ("3R Search and Rescue Plan" and "HKSOS Mobile Application") and "Signal Radar" were awarded three Gold Medals with the Congratulations of the Jury at the 48th International Exhibition of Inventions in Geneva in 2023, as detailed in paragraphs 10 to 12 of this paper.

thereby reducing the overall waiting time of the public and at the same time sparing more time for the staff of report rooms to focus on handling other requests for assistance from members of the public, thus enhancing the quality of service. The SSKs have also added the new "One-Stop Loss Reporting Service", which allows the public to authorise the HKPF to upload their lost property reports to the Mass Transit Railway's ("MTR's") "Online Lost Property Platform", thus saving them from making separate report to the MTR and increasing the chances for the public to recover their lost properties.

5.   As at 31 January 2024, there are a total of 14 SSKs respectively located in the report rooms of 11 police stations in various districts across the territory, the Reporting Centre at the Passenger Check-In Hall of Terminal 1 of the Hong Kong International Airport, and the public areas at MTR Admiralty Station and the Passenger Clearance Building at the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge Hong Kong Port, with the objective of providing more convenient services for the public.   The HKPF will keep the operation of the SSKs under review and consider extending them to more police stations, public areas and other high-traffic locations such as other suitable MTR stations and boundary control points as appropriate.

E-Service for Licence Application and Electronic Licence/Permit

6.   Starting from July 2022, the HKPF has fully launched the e-Service for Licence Application which provides online application and payment services for eight types of licences and permits[2], and in September 2023, the HKPF has added the "iAM Smart+" function.   To further assist the members of the public, the HKPF plans to make its licensing services fully electronic in mid-2024 by issuing electronic versions of licences and permits to members of the public through a newly developed mobile application.   In addition, as a key performance indicator in *The Chief Executive's 2023 Policy Address* ("2023 Policy Address"), the electronic payment option will be fully implemented by the third quarter of 2024 for all government fee-charging services, including the HKPF's e-Service for Licence Application, so that the public can choose to pay for the relevant services by using Faster Payment System ("FPS").

Hong Kong Police Force Online Applications Platform and Electronic Closed Area Permit System

7.   On 27 November 2023, the HKPF launched the first phase of the "Hong Kong Police Force Online Applications Platform" ("the Platform"), which covers

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[2]   (1) Arms Licensing, (2) Massage Establishments Licence, (3) Playing Musical Instruments on Public Streets or Roads Permit, (4) Pawnbrokers Licence, (5) Temporary Liquor Licence, (6) Lion/Dragon/Unicorn Dance Permit, (7) Security Personnel Permit, and (8) Societies Registration.

applications for Closed Area Permits, Road Event Permits and Location Filming. The Platform is designed to enhance user experience by allowing the public to register and log in to an "HKPF Digital Service Logon" account through the Platform to access a wide range of online services without the need to visit the relevant offices in person, thus reducing queuing and form-filling time. The Platform supports a variety of registration and logon methods, including email, local mobile phone number and "iAM Smart +".

8.　　As another key performance indicator in the 2023 Policy Address, the HKPF also launched the electronic Closed Area Permit (e-CAP) system on 1 December 2023 to ease the public to apply for and obtain e-CAP online, and the progress is on target. The e-CAP system has been opened to accept applications for visitors to the Sha Tau Kok Frontier Closed Area ("the FCA"), government officers and cross-boundary students. In the next phase, the system will support other categories of Closed Area Permit applications such as residents and persons working in the FCA.

9.　　The HKPF will continue to enhance the Platform, including further launching the second phase of the service in September 2024 for applications for Sexual Conviction Record Check, Certificate of No Criminal Conviction, Data Access Request for Criminal Conviction Data, and applications for the 992 Emergency Short Message Service ("SMS") Service, and launching the third phase of the service in February 2025 for members of the public to submit applications relating to police dogs, report suspicious transaction reports, and applications for assistance in academic research[3], etc.

B. Safeguarding public safety

"Smart Search and Rescue Solution" – "3R Search and Rescue Plan" and "HKSOS Mobile Application"

"3R Search and Rescue Plan"

10.　　In order to enhance the efficiency of search and rescue operations and protect the safety of rescuers, the HKPF developed and launched the "3R Search and Rescue Plan" in 2022, which combines the "R-Map", the "R-Cam" and the "R-Watch", to provide real-time vital information to the rescue departments, including the environment and terrain at the scene, the status of the rescue operation, and the physical condition of the rescuers, so as to enhance inter-departmental coordination. This will enhance inter-departmental coordination and operational efficiency. The programme provides the HKPF, Fire Services

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[3] For local and overseas academic researchers seeking assistance from the HKPF to conduct investigations, interviews, focus group discussions or similar activities for academic purposes in the HKPF.

Department ("FSD"), Civil Aid Service ("CAS") and Government Flying Service ("GFS") with a new integrated digital platform, which includes an electronic map showing the real-time location of rescue teams and live broadcast of real-time images of the rescue scene.   A total of 345 "R-Watch", 19 sets of "R-Cam" and "R-Map" terminals were distributed for use by the HKPF, FSD, CAS and GFS staff between 2022 and 2023.

<u>"HKSOS Mobile Application"</u>

11.   The HKPF developed its own "HKSOS Mobile Application" in 2023, which is specially designed for outdoor activities to assist the public in planning their journeys and safeguard their lives.   When a member of the public calls for help through the application, the 999 Reporting Centre will immediately receive the itinerary and location shared by the member of the public, thereby assisting search and rescue personnel to locate the person in need of help as soon as possible. The "HKSOS Mobile Application" can send out a unique, world's first-ever signal "Signal Radar", which can function even when there is no network coverage.   In addition, the application also provides nine categories of help-seeking messages in a graphical and text-based interface to cater for the needs of the hearing and speech impaired.

12.   The "HKSOS Mobile Application" was officially launched on 20 January 2024 as a key performance indicator in the 2023 Policy Address.   As at 5 February 2024, the "HKSOS Mobile Application" has recorded around 45 000 downloads from major application stores, and the application has successfully assisted six hikers in three search and rescue operations since its launch.

E-Crime Processing and Analysis Hub ("E-Hub") and Enhanced E-Report Centre

13.   The HKPF established the E-Hub on 19 September 2022 as a one-stop service platform for receiving, analysing, categorising and referring electronic reports on technology crimes and deceptions.   The E-Hub will also conduct correlation analysis on cases through an optimised computer system to identify relevant clusters of cases for consolidated investigation, with a view to focusing resources on following up the cases in a more efficient and effective manner, thereby enhancing the HKPF's effectiveness in handling technology crimes and deceptions.

14.   To tie in with the establishment of the E-Hub and to assist the public in reporting crimes, the HKPF e-Report Centre has also been enhanced, including improving the e-Report format, so that the public can provide the HKPF with

crime information in a clearer and more accurate manner, thereby facilitating the HKPF's follow-up actions on the cases. The E-Hub has been operating smoothly since its establishment and the e-Report Centre has been widely used by the public. The number of electronic reports on technology crimes and deceptions has increased from an average of about 2 200 per month prior to the establishment of the E-Hub to an average of about 3 700 per month at present. As at 31 January 2024, the E-Hub received a total of 59 357 electronic reports on technology crimes and deceptions, all of which were followed up in a timely manner. E-Hub maintains close cooperation with the Anti-Deception Coordination Centre on interception of payments in deception cases. As at 31 January 2024, a total of over HK$670 million of payments in deception cases was successfully intercepted for 269 technology crime and deception-related e-reporting cases. Over 80% (978) of the 1 166 respondents were satisfied with the E-Hub's services, with a rating of 8 or above (out of 10).

Installation of CCTV at Crime Black Spots

15. To further enhance law and order and combat crime in a holistic manner, the government plan to install closed-circuit televisions ("CCTVs") in public places with high crime rate and pedestrian flow in all 18 districts in Hong Kong, with a view to safeguarding public security and enhancing crime prevention and detection. This is a government-led territory-wide programme to be executed by the HKPF in collaboration with different government departments.

16. In fact, law enforcement agencies in the Mainland, the Macao Special Administrative Region and other countries, including Australia, the United Kingdom, Germany, Japan, Singapore, etc., have installed CCTV cameras in public places to assist law enforcement. According to relevant public information, the installation of CCTV cameras in public places has been effective in preventing crime, in particular, it can achieve a significant deterrent effect on violent and serious crimes on the streets. In addition, when a crime occurs, CCTV footage can provide more clues to assist the HKPF in investigating the case and bringing the culprits to justice.

17. The HKPF has analysed the crime records of various districts in Hong Kong and examined in detail a number of factors, such as the different characteristics and risks of the districts, as well as public order, etc. Locations in various districts in Hong Kong with high crime figures and high pedestrian flow have been identified and selected for installation, after conducting site surveys and studies on the technical options for installation in consultation with relevant government departments. At this stage, the plan is to install CCTVs at 615 locations territory-wide, involving installation at government buildings or facilities as well as conventional or smart lampposts. Among them, the HKPF

plans to install 15 sets of CCTV cameras in Mong Kok in March 2024 for testing the technicality, and then formally launch the installation programme involving the remaining 600 sets of CCTV cameras in mid-2024 after optimisation of the operation.

18.   On the protection of personal privacy, the CCTV cameras to be installed under the programme will only capture footage in public places and do not have any tracking function at this stage; and the operating procedures of the CCTV cameras will also comply with the requirements of the Personal Data (Privacy) Ordinance.   All video recordings will be deleted automatically after 30 days from the date of recording.   If law enforcement officers consider that the footage are of value for criminal investigation, they will duplicate the footage in accordance with HKPF's internal procedures, and follow the guidelines on the proper preservation and handling of video recordings.

19.   On information security, the relevant systems and data transmission should also comply with the government's IT security guidelines and requirements.   HKPF is drafting a set of comprehensive and robust internal operational guidelines with a view to providing clear and stringent supervision on the operation of CCTV systems.   HKPF will also coordinate in-house training programmes for police officers on the proper and effective operation of the video management system.

20.   To further enhance the effectiveness of crime prevention and detection, HKPF is studying the feasibility of equipping the CCTV system with artificial intelligence technology to facilitate law enforcement. The government will actively study and make reference to different practices in different places, including how to make effective use of technology, so as to maximise the public interest in the commencement of the programme.   HKPF will continue to review the effectiveness of the programme after the relevant cameras and systems have come into operation.

Combating Deception with the Use of Technology

21.   Deception has become increasingly serious in recent years.   The HKPF is very concerned about the situation.   Apart from continuing to combat deception through enhanced law enforcement, publicity and education, multi-agency cooperation, intelligence analysis and cross-boundary cooperation, the HKPF has also been actively making use of technology to combat online fraud.

22.   In September 2022, apart from setting up the aforementioned "E-Hub" which specialises in handling technology crimes and deceptions, the HKPF also launched a one-stop scam and pitfall search engine, "Scameter", and a mobile

application version, "Scameter+", in February the following year to help members of the public distinguish suspicious online platform accounts, payment accounts, telephone numbers, email addresses and websites, etc., and to provide anti-deception tips. As at 31 January 2024, the Scameter has recorded over 2.3 million searches and alerted about 400 000 frauds and cyber security risks. In November last year, the HKPF and 44 banks and stored value payment tools launched the "FPS Suspicious Proxy ID Alert", which utilises the information from "Scameter" to enhance alerts to users and remind them of the relevant risks before carrying out payment transactions. As of 31 January 2024, the system has issued more than 264 000 alerts, warning of nearly $410 million of high-risk transfers.

23.   The HKPF is actively enhancing the functions of the "Scameter+", and will add an automated element on 26 February 2024 to issue alerts immediately when users browse suspicious websites and receive suspicious calls, so as to remind members of the public to be more vigilant. At the same time, a mechanism will also be introduced for members of the public who come across suspicious calls or websites to report such call numbers and websites through the mobile application, thereby enriching the content of the database and assisting in combatting crime.

Collaboration between the Government and the Financial and Banking Sector

24.   The fight against fraud also relies on the cooperation of other stakeholders. Last year, the HKPF, together with key stakeholders such as the Hong Kong Monetary Authority ("HKMA") and the banking industry, introduced a number of innovative measures. They include the launch of the Financial Intelligence Evaluation Sharing Tool ("FINEST") in June 2023, which will enable banks to exchange information on corporate accounts involved in fraud-related money laundering activities with each other.

25.   Since June 2023, a number of banks and stored value payment instrument companies have also joined the use of the HKPF's Bank Document Digitalisation System to expedite the provision of relevant records of suspicious bank accounts to the HKPF, thereby enhancing the efficiency of investigation. Since the end of September last year, 28 retail banks have also implemented real-time fraud monitoring as required by the HKMA, including the use of technology to proactively identify suspicious accounts and alert potential victims of frauds, so as to stop the funds from flowing into the accounts of fraudsters.

Collaboration between the Government and the Telecommunications Industry

26.   At the same time, the HKPF, the Office of the Communications Authority

("OFCA") and telecommunications service providers have reached a number of consensus on the use of technology to achieve interception at source since the establishment of a working group in September 2022.   Apart from intercepting fraudulent calls from overseas with the prefix "+852" and sending text or voice alerts to users receiving calls from overseas prefixed with "+852", telecommunications service providers have also proactively blocked or suspended the services of telephone numbers suspected of engaging in fraudulent activities based on the fraudulent records and information provided by the HKPF, as well as blocking users' access to suspected fraudulent websites.   By the end of last year, telecommunications service providers have successfully intercepted more than 6 800 website links involved in fraud cases and blocked or suspended more than 2 400 telephone numbers suspected to be involved in fraud cases.   In addition, telecommunications service providers have taken the initiative to identify and block fraudulent calls at the technical level.   By the end of last year, about 510 000 local telephone numbers were thereby suspended as a result.

27.   To further combat telephone and SMS frauds, the OFCA introduced the SMS Sender Registration Scheme (the Scheme) in late December 2023 to help members of the public verify the identities of SMS senders.   The telecommunication industry, 28 major banks and various government departments have joined the Scheme.   Under the Scheme, all participating companies or organisations will use Registered SMS Sender IDs with the prefix "#" when they send SMS messages to local subscribers of mobile services.   The OFCA will monitor the implementation of the Scheme, and continue to deliberate with other sectors and government departments to encourage participation of sectors that use SMS to communicate with their users, in order to expand the Scheme.

28.   The HKPF will continue to work with relevant stakeholders to explore the feasibility of utilising advanced technology (including artificial intelligence) to combat deception.

Advice Sought

29.   Members are invited to note the latest developments in Digital Policing and provide views on the relevant IT projects.

Security Bureau
February 2024