

### **LCQ13: Enforcement actions against illegal gambling activities**

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Following is a question by the Hon Andrew Cheng and a written reply by the Secretary for Home Affairs, Dr Patrick Ho, in the Legislative Council today (June 22):

Questions:

It has been reported that illegal gambling activities have become increasingly rampant recently. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council of:

(a) the number of cases in which law enforcement actions were taken by the Police against illegal gambling activities in Hong Kong, the amount of money involved, the number of persons arrested and the penalties imposed by the courts in each of the past three year and, among these cases, the number of those involving offshore illegal gambling activities, broken down by the nature of activities involved (such as soccer gambling, horse racing, dog racing and illegal gambling dens, etc); and

(b) the measures to combat cross-border illegal gambling activities?

Reply:

Madam President,

My reply to the questions is as follows:

(a) The statistics on enforcement actions taken by the Police against illegal gambling activities in the past three years are set out in the following tables:

2002

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Type of cases

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(1) Bookmaking (HK horse racing only) --

- Successful raids: 12
- No of persons arrested: 21
- Total amount of cash seized (\$): 552,240
- Total amount of bets seized (\$): 9,146,820

- (2) Bookmaking (football betting only) --
  - Successful raids: 70
  - No of persons arrested: 120
  - Total amount of cash seized (\$): 382,990
  - Total amount of bets seized (\$): 57,242,640
  
- (3) Bookmaking (mixed composition including horse racing, football, Mark Six, etc) --
  - Successful raids: 4
  - No of persons arrested: 11
  - Total amount of cash seized (\$): 33,180
  - Total amount of bets seized (\$): 1,552,550
  
- (4) Illegal gambling establishment --
  - (a) Mahjong gambling:
    - Successful raids: 87
    - No of persons arrested: 862
    - Total amount of cash seized (\$): 338,310
    - Total amount of bets seized (\$): 284,720
  - (b) Others:
    - Successful raids: 59
    - No of persons arrested: 887
    - Total amount of cash seized (\$): 1,998,110
    - Total amount of bets seized (\$): 1,952,040
  
- (5) Street gambling --
  - Successful raids: 118
  - No of persons arrested: 561
  - Total amount of cash seized (\$): 124,720
  - Total amount of bets seized (\$): /
  
- (6) Gambling at other places (e.g. construction sites and restaurants, etc) --
  - (a) Mahjong gambling:
    - Successful raids: 10
    - No of persons arrested: 90
    - Total amount of cash seized (\$): 14,020
    - Total amount of bets seized (\$): /
  - (b) Others:
    - Successful raids: 589
    - No of persons arrested: 3,195
    - Total amount of cash seized (\$): 745,350

- Total amount of bets seized (\$):52,810

2003

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Type of cases

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(1) Bookmaking (HK horse racing only) --

- Successful raids: 12
- No of persons arrested: 26
- Total amount of cash seized (\$): /
- Total amount of bets seized (\$): 4,891,440

(2) Bookmaking (football betting only) --

- Successful raids: 52
- No of persons arrested: 87
- Total amount of cash seized (\$): 350,160
- Total amount of bets seized (\$): 36,130,170

(3) Bookmaking (mixed composition including horse racing, football, Mark Six, etc) --

- Successful raids: 9
- No of persons arrested: 18
- Total amount of cash seized (\$): 140
- Total amount of bets seized (\$): 2,791,990

(4) Illegal gambling establishment --

(a) Mahjong gambling:

- Successful raids: 82
- No of persons arrested: 940
- Total amount of cash seized (\$): 472,650
- Total amount of bets seized (\$): 1,088,580

(b) Others:

- Successful raids: 74
- No of persons arrested: 1,355
- Total amount of cash seized (\$): 1,829,340
- Total amount of bets seized (\$): 6,856,930

(5) Street gambling --

- Successful raids: 181
- No of persons arrested: 766

- Total amount of cash seized (\$): 67,720
- Total amount of bets seized (\$): /

(6) Gambling at other places (e.g. construction sites and restaurants, etc) --

(a) Mahjong gambling:

- Successful raids: 24
- No of persons arrested: 170
- Total amount of cash seized (\$): 7,410
- Total amount of bets seized (\$): /

(b) Others:

- Successful raids: 671
- No of persons arrested: 3,493
- Total amount of cash seized (\$): 706,910
- Total amount of bets seized (\$): 6,460

2004

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Type of cases

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(1) Bookmaking (HK horse racing only) --

- Successful raids: 9
- No of persons arrested: 15
- Total amount of cash seized (\$): 55,090
- Total amount of bets seized (\$): 2,647,230

(2) Bookmaking (football betting only) --

- Successful raids: 42
- No of persons arrested: 70
- Total amount of cash seized (\$): 40,200
- Total amount of bets seized (\$): 21,070,180

(3) Bookmaking (mixed composition including horse racing, football, Mark Six, etc) --

- Successful raids: 20
- No of persons arrested: 112
- Total amount of cash seized (\$): 294,730
- Total amount of bets seized (\$): 16,703,430

(4) Illegal gambling establishment --

(a) Mahjong Gambling:

- Successful raids: 146

- No of persons arrested: 1,501
- Total amount of cash seized (\$): 463,030
- Total amount of bets seized (\$): 165,700

(b) Others:

- Successful raids: 106
- No of persons arrested: 1,774
- Total amount of cash seized (\$): 1,604,930
- Total amount of bets seized (\$): 2,102,150

(5) Street gambling --

- Successful raids: 142
- No of persons arrested: 768
- Total amount of cash seized (\$): 144,630
- Total amount of bets seized (\$): /

(6) Gambling at other places (e.g. construction sites and restaurants, etc) --

(a) Mahjong Gambling:

- Successful raids: 8
- No of persons arrested: 55
- Total amount of cash seized (\$): 1,340
- Total amount of bets seized (\$): /

(b) Others:

- Successful raids: 533
- No of persons arrested: 3,158
- Total amount of cash seized (\$): 395,240
- Total amount of bets seized (\$): 61,330

2005 (January to March)

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Type of cases

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(1) Bookmaking (HK horse racing only) --

- Successful raids: 3
- No of persons arrested: 5
- Total amount of cash seized (\$): /
- Total amount of bets seized (\$): 2,624,300

(2) Bookmaking (football betting only) --

- Successful raids: 4
- No of persons arrested: 9

- Total amount of cash seized (\$): /
  - Total amount of bets seized (\$): 8,220,000
- (3) Bookmaking (mixed composition including horse racing, football, Mark Six, etc) --
- Successful raids: 12
  - No of persons arrested: 30
  - Total amount of cash seized (\$): 12,570
  - Total amount of bets seized (\$): 1,325,760
- (4) Illegal gambling establishment --
- (a) Mahjong gambling:
- Successful raids: 45
  - No of persons arrested: 440
  - Total amount of cash seized (\$): 72,700
  - Total amount of bets seized (\$): 62,700
- (b) Others:
- Successful raids: 9
  - No of persons arrested: 121
  - Total amount of cash seized (\$): 237,110
  - Total amount of bets seized (\$): 890
- (5) Street gambling --
- Successful raids: 30
  - No of persons arrested: 131
  - Total amount of cash seized (\$): 9,920
  - Total amount of bets seized (\$): /
- (6) Gambling at other places (e.g. construction sites and restaurants, etc) --
- (a) Mahjong gambling:
- Successful raids: 1
  - No of persons arrested: 4
  - Total amount of cash seized (\$): /
  - Total amount of bets seized (\$): /
- (b) Others:
- Successful raids: 115
  - No of persons arrested: 761
  - Total amount of cash seized (\$): 88,310
  - Total amount of bets seized (\$): /

The Police has neither figures on cases involving offshore illegal gambling activities

nor information about the penalties imposed by the courts in cases relating to illegal gambling activities.

(b) The Government has been combating illegal gambling activities (including cross-border gambling) through the following measures:

- (i) Putting in place effective anti-gambling legislation;
- (ii) Taking vigorous law enforcement actions; and
- (iii) Authorising and regulating certain types of gambling activities to divert the demand from illegal channels into authorised outlets.

Under the existing Gambling Ordinance, all gambling activities by way of trade and business are unlawful, except expressly exempted or authorised by the Government. It is illegal for any person to place a bet from Hong Kong with bookmakers irrespective of where the bet is received; engages in bookmaking activities in Hong Kong; or promotes or facilitates bookmaking activities in Hong Kong.

In tackling illegal gambling activities, the Police implements both enforcement actions and preventive measures. The Police takes vigorous enforcement actions against both local and offshore illegal gambling activities conducted in Hong Kong. It conducts intelligence-led operations against syndicated bookmaking and offshore illegal gambling activities, in particular during major football matches and championships. It also maintains close liaisons and exchanges intelligence with the Mainland, Macau and overseas law enforcement agencies to combat illegal bookmaking activities outside Hong Kong. The Police also conducts public education programme to warn the public not to participate in illegal gambling activities. It has also set up a Gambling Hotline (2860 8366) to facilitate the reporting of illegal gambling activities by the public.

Under our existing gambling policy, we would only consider whether to authorise and regulate a specific type of gambling activity when (a) there is a persistent and strong public demand for such gambling activities; (b) the demand is being satisfied by illegal channels which could not be effectively tackled by enforcement actions alone, and (c) the proposal to authorise such activities has wide public support. The primary purpose is to supplement the effects of anti-gambling legislation and law enforcement efforts in combating illegal gambling.

Ends/Friday, June 22, 2005