

## **Horse race betting licence issued to HKJC**

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The Secretary for Home Affairs, Dr Patrick Ho, today (August 28) issued a licence on horse race betting to the HKJC Horse Race Betting Limited (HKJC).

The licence will be effective on September 1, 2006, so the HKJC can conduct betting on approved horse races from September 1, 2006, to August 31, 2007. The licensing conditions stipulated under the Betting Duty Ordinance form part of the licence.

A spokesman for the Home Affairs Bureau said the Secretary for Home Affairs was glad to issue the licence to HKJC as this was the first time the Government had rationalised the regulatory regime of horse race betting.

"The licence provides a number of mandatory conditions to prevent underage and excessive gambling which seek to minimise the negative impact of horse race betting on the society, in particular, the adolescents," the spokesman said.

The licence is subject to variation and imposition of new conditions by the Secretary for Home Affairs on the advice of the Betting and Lotteries Commission – the functions of which have been expanded to include advising the Government on the regulation of the conduct of horse races and the variation of the licensing conditions.

The Secretary for Home Affairs could also consult the Commission and issue Codes of Practice as and when appropriate to prescribe detailed guidelines on particular aspects of the licensing conditions.

"The Government will continue to enhance public awareness of the risk of gambling-related activities and help them better understand the gambling problem," the spokesman said.

"To this end, we are pleased to note that the HKJC has undertaken to contribute up to \$15 million each year for the next two years to the Ping Wo Fund to address gambling problem through public education and preventive programmes. Specifically, the fund will finance counselling, treatment and remedial services for problem and

pathological gamblers. We are also pleased that the HKJC is prepared to consider requests to increase its contribution to the fund when such applications are received.

"The Administration will closely monitor the initial impact of the HKJC's rebate arrangements and, if necessary, introduce further guidelines in the Code of Practice. The Betting and Lotteries Commission will be consulted on this in due course," he added.

Ends/Monday, August 28, 2006