

Betting and Lotteries Commission discussed entrance of under-aged family members of horse owners into Shatin Racecourse on Owners Fun Days

The following is issued on behalf of the Betting and Lotteries Commission:

The Betting and Lotteries Commission (BLC) met today (January 25) to discuss issues including the renewal of the football betting licence and the Owners Fun Days organised by the Hong Kong Jockey Club (HKJC).

The BLC recommended to the Secretary for Home Affairs (SHA) the renewal of the licence for football betting to the HKJC Football Betting Limited for another five years from July 2008.

The BLC reiterated that the HKJC should continue to bear in mind its social responsibility of minimising the adverse impact of gambling on the community, especially on the young people, and to prevent under-aged betting. Among other issues, the BLC strongly encouraged the HKJC to continue to provide funding to the Ping Wo Fund to finance preventive and remedial measures to help address the gambling-related problems.

The HKJC representatives briefed the BLC members on the arrangements to allow horse owners and HKJC club members upon the invitation of horse owners to bring their family members under the age of 18 to the non-betting areas of the Shatin Racecourse on designated Owners Fun Days. The BLC noted that the current arrangements did not violate the licensing conditions or the code of practice on the conduct on horse race betting. The HKJC elaborated on the various measures to prohibit the under-aged family members from having access to the betting facilities and assured BLC members that it would continue to remain vigilant in this regard.

Nevertheless, some BLC members expressed grave concerns over the arrangements in view of the change in the practice of allowing only adults to enter the racecourse. The BLC had yet to consider the impact of the arrangements on the community, particularly the young people.

To facilitate its consideration, the BLC would arrange a meeting to listen to views of interested members of the public on the subject on whether the HKJC should continue, modify (e.g. restrict the access of children of horse owners and HKJC Club

members upon the invitation of horse owners on special occasions, such as the Chinese New Year only) or cease the arrangements. Taking into account public views, the BLC would consider recommending SHA to revise the licensing conditions or the code of practice on horse race betting as necessary.

The BLC would meet at least every six months. To better tap public views on horse race betting, football betting and lotteries, the BLC will introduce a new arrangement whereby members would take turn to meet the public to listen to their views on the regulation matters.

The BLC, chaired by Mr Moses Cheng, is an advisory body set up under the Betting Duty Ordinance. The BLC currently comprises 12 unofficial members including the chairman. The function of the BLC is to advise SHA on the –

- i. regulation of the conduct of horse race betting, football betting and lotteries in accordance with the provisions of the Betting Duty Ordinance and the licensing conditions;
- ii. compliance with the licensing conditions by the licensees;
- iii. handling of public complaints relating to the compliance of the licensing conditions by the licensees;
- iv. imposition of financial penalties on the licensees; and
- v. issuance and revocation of horse race betting, football betting and lottery licences; and variation of the conditions of such licences.

Ends/Friday, January 25, 2008