

Speaking note by SHA at Special Meeting of Finance Committee

Following is the speaking note (English translation) by the Secretary for Home Affairs, Mr Tsang Tak-sing, at the Special Meeting of the Finance Committee of the Legislative Council today (March 25):

President,

The Home Affairs Bureau (HAB) is responsible for quite a diversified policy portfolio covering a total of eight Heads of Expenditure. Total expenditure on policy and programme areas under the purview of HAB amounts to \$9.591 billion in 2009-10. Our priority areas with additional resources provided in the new financial year are as follows:

(I) Hong Kong 2009 East Asian Games

The 2009 East Asian Games (EAG), the first large-scale international multi-sports games to be held in Hong Kong, will be staged between December 5 and 13 this year. Drawing on the successful experience of co-hosting the 2008 Olympic Equestrian Events, we are preparing for the EAG according to schedule. All the construction and upgrading works for the EAG competition venues are expected to be completed by the middle of this year. These works have been carried out not only to provide competition venues that are up to the international standards for staging the EAG and other international sports events in future, but also to provide members of the public with better sports facilities.

Regarding publicity and promotion, we will encourage the participation of District Councils, schools and community organisations etc, in the organisation of community activities for wider and active participation of the public. Moreover, a series of promotion and publicity work will also be widely launched, including city dress-up, roving exhibitions on EAG, the broadcast of the EAG theme song "You are the Legend", TV Announcement of Public Interest, the Hong Kong Flower Show with "Blossoming Welcome for the EAG" as the theme, the release of the "Heartwarming Stamps" and commemorative stamps for the EAG, the staging of a 100-day countdown and torch relay, etc. Through these events, we seek to further enhance public awareness of the EAG and make it an event well looked forward to by the community. Meanwhile, we will also publicise the EAG via our overseas Economic and Trade Offices and will join with the Hong Kong Tourism Board to promote the

EAG overseas.

We are confident that the hosting of the EAG will not only benefit sports development in Hong Kong, but will also enhance public interest in sports. Through community participation, the EAG will also strengthen the cohesiveness of our citizens. We will host, within the budget, a successful EAG that will not be extravagant but will have its own characteristics.

(II) Promotion of Sports Development in Hong Kong

Following the Beijing 2008 Olympic and Paralympic Games, there has been an upsurge in the community's interest in sport. To build on this public enthusiasm, we will further promote sport development in Hong Kong.

We have earmarked \$50 million in the Sir David Trench Fund for Recreation for National Sports Associations (NSAs) and District Sports Associations to establish new sports facilities and purchase sports equipment in the next three to four years. This initiative will encourage closer co-operation between NSAs and district level organisations in promoting sport in the community.

To help identify and develop more young athletes, in 2009-10 we will allocate not less than \$10 million to help NSAs strengthen their feeder programmes in collaboration with various community sectors.

We will also provide additional recurrent funding of \$12 million to the Hong Kong Sports Institute to increase their support of elite athletes and to enhance the capability of Hong Kong athletes to perform at the highest levels of international competition.

We will liaise with the business sector to sponsor underprivileged groups to attend major sports events. Also, we will strengthen the promotion of major sports held locally with a view to further stimulating public participation and promoting Hong Kong as an events capital.

(III) Celebration Activities for the 60th Anniversary of the Founding of the PRC

This year marks the "60th anniversary of the founding of PRC". We will continue to work closely with the Committee on the Promotion of Civic Education (CPCE), the Commission of Youth (CoY), 18 District Councils and various sectors of

the community in organising a series of celebration activities for the 60th National Anniversary. We will conduct a number of exhibitions, seminars and performances as well as the exchange programmes between the youth from Hong Kong and the Mainland, so that the public can share the celebration atmosphere while at the same time further enhance their understanding of the motherland.

(IV) Nurturing Local Artists and Audience Development

To prepare for the development of the West Kowloon Cultural District, we will further strengthen our support for the local artists and arts groups. We will also continue our efforts to nurture a wider local audience for the arts. In 2009-10, we are supporting our major performing arts groups with about \$270 million. The Hong Kong Arts Development Council will launch a new two-year grant scheme in 2009-10 to enhance support for the small and medium-sized groups in order to create a more effective progression ladder for them. We will commence a consultancy study on funding for the performing arts before mid of this year. Our aim is to usher in a funding system to improve funding assessment criteria and funding mechanism and ensure the development of a performing arts ecosystem that is both vibrant and sustainable. The New Senior Secondary School Curriculum to be implemented in the 2009 school year requires each senior secondary student to spend a dedicated amount of class time on aesthetic experience. The Leisure and Cultural Services Department will be organising new programmes suitable for the senior secondary students. We have recently joined with the Education Bureau to organise an Arts Mart to provide a platform for the local artists and arts groups to showcase their arts education programmes to the school sector. Regarding arts education and audience development, the Hong Kong Arts Development Council has just launched an Enhanced Community Arts and Cultural Activities Programme to bring the arts closer to the community by supporting closer collaboration between the district arts organisations and professional arts organisations. We are fully supportive of our two executive agencies in these arts education and audience building initiatives. Also, we encourage District Councils to organise cultural activities with local characteristics in their respective districts. Before permanent venues are developed in the West Kowloon Cultural District, diversified arts activities in temporary venues are encouraged to begin preliminary work to create people flow in the district.

(V) Development of Cantonese Opera

Cantonese Opera is an important part of our local culture. We will continue to preserve, promote and develop Cantonese Opera. In 2009-10, we will allocate more

than \$33 million for the development of Cantonese Opera. In addition, \$20 million will be injected into the Cantonese Opera Development Fund for the further promotion and development of Cantonese Opera. In February 2009, the Legislative Council approved a funding of about \$186 million to convert the Yau Ma Tei Theatre and the Red Brick Building into a Xiqu Activity Centre. The conversion project will commence within this year. Separately, we will provide financial support to Cantonese Opera troupes for staging performances at the Sunbeam Theatre through the Hong Kong Arts Development Council. We are also actively seeking donation through the Cantonese Opera Development Fund to keep the Sunbeam Theatre running. We are thankful for the donation from generous supporters of Cantonese Opera development. In the long run, we will construct a Xiqu Centre at the West Kowloon Cultural District, which includes a large performance venue of 1,400 seats and a small theatre of 400 seats to be completed in 2014-15.

(VI) Social Enterprise

We will continue our effort to promote the development of social enterprises (SEs) to create employment opportunities for the underprivileged at district level and to strengthen the concept of self-reliance with a view to fostering the values of civil society and promoting social harmony. I am delighted that our effort in promoting SE development has received the endorsement and support of many legislators and community personalities.

Social enterprises are business operations. In the wake of the financial tsunami, like other business entities, SEs face a tough operating environment. Apart from implementing the "Enhancing Self-Reliance Through District Partnership Programme" which provides seed money to support SEs during their initial operation, the Administration will consider providing supplementary grant to SEs under the Programme to enhance their sustainability in the face of the tough operating environment. Since the launching of this measure in December last year, we have received 19 applications for supplementary grant and approved nine of them, involving an amount of \$2.2 million. We will also continue to implement the "Social Enterprises Partnership Programme" to promote different forms of cross-sector collaboration to encourage the diversification of SE development. Moreover, Home Affairs Bureau and Home Affairs Department have earmarked a total of \$9 million in the 2009-10 financial year to enhance SE promotion. We are examining the situation of SEs in order to map out a work plan to assist in creating an operating environment conducive to SE development.

(VII) Employment Opportunities

Enhancing Self-Reliance Through District Partnership Programme

Since the implementation of the Enhancing Self-Reliance Through District Partnership Programme in June 2006, a total grant of about \$76 million has been approved to 80 new social enterprise projects in the four phases of applications, creating about 1,400 jobs for the socially disadvantaged.

The approved projects cover a wide range of businesses, including catering, beauty/hair salon, massage, household cleaning and related services, recycling, renovation, retail, artistic performance, car servicing and organic farming. These projects will mainly create some low-skilled jobs and offer job opportunities to the disadvantaged groups.

Minor Works Programmes

We fully understand the community's expectation for more job opportunities to be created through expediting the minor works programmes. The estimated expenditure under various government minor works programmes in 2009-10 is more than \$8 billion, while the share of the District Minor Works (DMW) programme and the Rural Public Works (RPW) programme co-ordinated by the Home Affairs Department (HAD) is \$420 million. We will try to fully utilise the funding so as to provide better district facilities for the 18 Districts and to create job opportunities. For 2009-10, we estimate that more than 950 jobs lasting for 12 months will be created (including 630 jobs under the DMW programme and 320 jobs under the RPW programme). Works staff that will benefit include skilled labour, technical and ancillary staff, and professional staff.

(VIII) Conclusion

This concludes my opening remarks. My colleagues and I will be glad to answer questions from Members. Thank you.

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