

LCQ20: Combating illegal football betting

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Following is a question by the Hon Lau Kong-wah and a written reply by the Secretary for Home Affairs, Mr Tsang Tak-sing, in the Legislative Council today (May 19):

Question:

Regarding the Police's efforts in combating illegal football betting and drink driving during the World Cup 2010, will the Government inform this Council:

- (a) whether the Police will deploy additional manpower to combat illegal football betting and drink driving during the aforesaid period; if they will, of the additional manpower to be deployed, and whether the manpower deployed for other police work will be affected;
- (b) given that while the Police had, during the past World Cup matches, deployed police officers to undertake law enforcement actions against illegal football betting in bars in various districts, and with the advancement of technology, many lawbreakers have switched to the Internet to engage in illegal football betting and receive bets for football betting, whether the Police will change its strategy to combat illegal football betting on the Internet; of their strategy on gathering evidence, and whether there is a need to enhance their computer resources and information technology manpower;
- (c) whether the Police have commenced their actions in combating the aforesaid problems, and whether they have assessed the effectiveness of those actions so far; if assessment has been made, of the results; and
- (d) given that the Police have stated that they will strengthen their liaison with the law enforcement agencies of the Mainland, Macao and Southeast Asian countries and exchange intelligence with them during the World Cup period in order to combat illegal football betting, of the present progress and the number of operations conducted in the past three months?

Reply:

President,

(a) The Police have been combating drink driving through publicity, education and enforcement, and there would be no exception during the World Cup. On publicity and education, the Police Regional Road Safety Teams would enhance their publicity efforts at bar areas and distribute leaflets appealing to members of the public not to drive after drinking. On law enforcement, the Police will continue to conduct Random Breath Tests Operations at appropriate time and locations in order to enhance deterrent effect.

On combating illegal gambling activities, the Police will step up law enforcement actions against illegal football betting during the World Cup. The relevant arrangements have been included in the Police's overall plan for this year.

The abovementioned arrangements will not affect the manpower deployment for other police duties.

(b) The Police have been closely monitoring Internet gambling activities. To combat the relevant crimes, the Technology Crime Division of the Police will conduct cyber patrols. Other formations will also gather intelligence through different channels, investigate illegal gambling websites within and outside Hong Kong and take law enforcement actions after gathering sufficient evidence. In addition, the Police will also conduct internal training and update equipment and facilities so as to raise frontline officers' knowledge in the latest development of Internet gambling activities and enhance their capability in handling such cases.

(c) and (d) The Police have strategies in place to combat illegal gambling and will adjust the operational deployment flexibly depending on the situation. In order to prevent and address the possible increase in illegal football gambling activities during the World Cup, a special cadre has been set up with the Organised Crime and Triad Bureau co-ordinating the work of the headquarters, regional and district formations in this respect.

Besides, owing to the vigorous enforcement actions taken by the Police over the years, most of the illegal bookmaking syndicates have moved their operation bases to places outside Hong Kong, including operating illegal gambling websites or offshore bookmaking activities through other Internet platforms. In view of this, the Police have maintained close liaison through existing communication channels with their counterparts in the Mainland, Macau and South East Asia to exchange information

and carry out joint operations from time to time targeting criminal syndicates based in or outside Hong Kong. During the World Cup, the Police will continue to step up law enforcement actions against illegal football gambling with the law enforcement agencies of the Mainland, Macau and overseas through existing communication channels.

In the first quarter of this year, the Police successfully conducted four raids and arrested seven people, involving an amount of more than \$550,000 in illegal bookmaking.

Ends/Wednesday, May 19, 2010

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