

LCQ17: Conduct of police officers

Following is a question by the Hon Paul Tse and a written reply by the Acting Secretary for Security, Mr Michael Cheuk, in the Legislative Council today (May 24):

Question:

According to media reports, the number of cases in which police officers commit crimes has shown a significant upward trend in recent years. Some members of the public have relayed that on one hand, the Police are required to fulfil their duty to stringently combat crimes related to national security, but on the other hand, there have repeatedly been messages about police officers committing crimes; meanwhile, an increasing number of serious crimes have also taken place in society, such as (i) homicide and dismemberment, (ii) robbery with firearms, (iii) burglary, (iv) telephone fraud involving a substantial amount of money, (v) crime involving non-ethnic Chinese persons on recognisance and issued with Form No. 8 (commonly known as going-out passes) and (vi) voyeurism, etc. The ever-increasing number of such cases has inevitably resulted in an unnecessary and biased public perception that the Police "emphasise national security over law and order", thus undermining the confidence of members of the public and even the international society in the Police in respect of upholding the rule of law in Hong Kong, as well as affecting the Hong Kong Police's image of excellence and professionalism. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the number of aforesaid criminal crimes in (i) to (vi) in the past 12 months; whether there is an upward trend in such figures as compared with those in the previous three years;

(2) of the number of police officers arrested and prosecuted due to suspected involvement in criminal offences in the past 12 months and, among them, the number of persons convicted and sentenced to various penalties, such as fines and imprisonment; of the rates of changes in the relevant figures when compared with those in the past three years;

(3) whether it has assessed and gained an understanding of the reasons for the increasing number of cases of police officers breaking the law, and the negative impacts of the frequent occurrence of the cases of police officers breaking the law on public confidence in the Police's law enforcement and the image of the Police;

(4) of the policies and measures in place to enhance the individual behavioral discipline and professional conduct of police officers on one hand, and restrain police officers from committing crimes on the other hand; and

(5) given that the Police have recently relaxed the entry requirements, such

as local academic qualifications, etc., for police officers, of the measures the authorities have in place to ensure that the relevant relaxation will not cause any negative impacts on the newly-recruited police officers in respect of personal conduct, civilised culture, as well as emphasis on law and compliance with regulations?

Reply:

President,

The Police attach great importance to the conduct and behaviour of their officers. Police officers must meet the requirements on behaviour and discipline, and must uphold the Police's values in areas such as impartiality and professionalism. The Police have put in place an Integrated Integrity Management Framework to promote integrity and honesty among Police officers, as well as to monitor their discipline and conduct. Under the established mechanism to regulate Police officers' behaviour and discipline, all cases of breach of the law or discipline will be investigated in a serious manner and handled fairly and impartially.

The reply to the Member's question is as follows:

(1) The numbers of homicide, robbery with firearms/ arms, burglary (in residential premises), telephone deception, voyeurism and related crimes from 2019 to 2022 are shown in the table below:

(No. of cases)	2022	2021	2020	2019
Homicide	30	23	22	24
Robbery with firearms/ arms	0	0	1	1
Burglary (in residential premises)	500	952	1 215	1 332
Telephone deception	2 831	1 140	1 193	648
Voyeurism and related crimes (Note 1)	635	134 (This only reflects the number of cases for around three months)	N/A	N/A

Note 1: The Police started to maintain the relevant number of cases from October 8, 2021 after voyeurism and related crimes were gazetted and

implemented. The case numbers include the four offences of "voyeurism", "illegal filming or observation of private parts", "publishing images derived from the above-mentioned crimes" and "publishing or threatening to publish private images without consent".

The number of non-ethnic Chinese arrested for committing criminal offences is as follows:

(pax)	2022	2021	2020	2019
Non-ethnic Chinese persons arrested for criminal offences	2 803	3 251	3 109	2 801

In addition, the numbers of homicide, robbery with firearms/ arms, burglary (in residential premises), telephone deception, voyeurism and related crimes in the first quarter of 2019 to 2023 are shown in the table below:

(No. of cases)	Q1 2023	Q1 2022	Q1 2021	Q1 2020	Q1 2019
Homicide	6	7	4	2	6
Robbery with firearms/ arms	0	0	0	1	0
Burglary (in residential premises)	134	88	205	312	237
Telephone deception	597	339	200	169	127
Voyeurism and related crimes (Note 2)	166	110	N/A	N/A	N/A

Note 2: The Police started to maintain the relevant number of cases from October 8, 2021 after voyeurism and related crimes were gazetted and implemented. The case numbers include the four offences of "voyeurism", "illegal filming or observation of private parts", "publishing images derived from the above-mentioned crimes" and "publishing or threatening to publish private images without consent".

The number of non-ethnic Chinese arrested for committing criminal

offences is as follows:

(pax)	Q1 2023	Q1 2022	Q1 2021	Q1 2020	Q1 2019
Non-ethnic Chinese arrested for criminal offences	776	513	785	693	817

As seen from the above tables, except for telephone deception, the numbers of related crimes in the first quarter of this year were similar to or have decreased as compared with those in 2019 (before the epidemic). Deception cases have been on the rise in recent years, with major increase in "online shopping fraud", "employment fraud", "investment fraud" and "telephone deception".

The Police will continue to combat deception through all-round measures. Apart from strengthening law enforcement actions and publicity work, the Police will also continue to work with other stakeholders, including the banking, telecommunications, and Internet industry, to combat deception collectively. In particular, in terms of combating telephone deception, the Police have established a dedicated working group with the Office of the Communications Authority and mobile network operators in September last year, and implemented a series of measures to combat telephone deception and Internet deception over the past six months. In addition, the Police's Anti-Deception Coordination Center (ADCC) continues to play its role. In the first quarter of this year, victims of more than 220 deception cases were dissuaded from remitting defrauded funds, and defrauded funds amounted to \$380 million were intercepted. The ADCC will continue to co-ordinate the work of various departments and units of the Police in combating and preventing deception.

(2) Between January to April this year, a total of 11 regular Police officers were arrested, and there were 42, 37, 45 and 24 regular Police officers arrested in the whole year of 2022, 2021, 2020 and 2019 respectively. The Police do not maintain statistical record on other requested figures.

(3) As a professional disciplined force, members of the public have very high expectations towards the conduct and discipline of Police officers. The Police have rigorous discipline and a strict regime to manage the conduct and behaviour of Police officers. While there may be individual officers whose breach of the law or discipline has departed from the values of the Police, the public should not let the extremely small number of isolated cases obliterate the contribution and efforts of the overall Police officers who remain dedicated to their duties. The Police will continue to uphold and reinforce the core values of integrity, fairness, impartiality and professionalism with a view to consistently enhancing the public's confidence and trust in the work of Police officers.

(4) The Police management has been adopting a zero tolerance attitude to all

cases of breach of the law or discipline by Police officers resolutely. Supervisors are required to carry out their supervisory responsibilities stringently in order to enhance the public's confidence and trust in the Police.

In fact, Police officers are required to adhere to the rules of conduct and discipline both on and off duty. In this connection, the Police have formulated an integrity management strategy with a four-pronged approach:

- (1) education and integrity culture building;
- (2) governance and control;
- (3) enforcement and deterrence; and
- (4) reintegration and support, in order to consistently enhance the quality and high integrity of Police members.

In addition, in May 2020, the Integrity Audit Action Group (IAAG) was established with a view to making the enforcement work of integrity management more targeted. The objectives of IAAG include:

- (1) to proactively investigate cases of suspected serious breach of regulations or discipline, or even illegal acts of officers;
- (2) to identify work procedures with potential risks for rectification as early as possible; and
- (3) to enhance the monitoring and supervision regime on the behaviour and conduct of officers.

Since its establishment, the IAAG has been proactively examining cases of suspected breach of regulations or discipline involving Police members. Apart from undertaking the Supervisory Accountability Study, the IAAG has also been continuously reviewing the Police's existing workflow and optimising related procedures.

The IAAG is also responsible for implementing various integrity management measures, including the Voluntary Drug Test Scheme, the Financial Screening Scheme and the Financial Declaration to deepen the integrity management culture and prevent misconduct.

- (5) The selection process for recruitment to the Police comprises group interview, final interview, physical fitness test, psychometric test, Basic Law and Hong Kong National Security Law test, medical examination and integrity checks, etc. Candidates will be considered for appointment based on their performance throughout the selection process alongside other relevant factors.