

Opening remarks by S for S at LegCo Finance Committee special meeting

Following is the English translation of the opening remarks by the Secretary for Security, Mr John Lee, at the special meeting of the Legislative Council Finance Committee today (April 12):

Chairman,

In the draft Estimates for the new financial year, allocation for the policy areas under the Security Bureau's responsibility will account for \$48.9 billion, representing 8 per cent of the total government expenditure.

On law and order, the major operational targets of the Hong Kong Police Force (HKPF) for 2019 are to combat violent crimes, triads, syndicated and organised crimes, dangerous drugs and "quick-cash" crimes; to enhance cyber security and combat technology crimes; and to ensure public safety and step up counter-terrorism work.

A total of 179 additional posts will be created in the HKPF in 2019-20. These new posts are mainly for increasing manpower support for the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge (HZMB), strengthening the HKPF's capability in tackling trafficking in persons (TIP) and protecting foreign domestic helpers, and enhancing Hong Kong's capabilities in anti-money laundering and counter-terrorist financing, etc.

On control points, the two new ports at the Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link West Kowloon Terminal and the HZMB Hong Kong Port were commissioned in September and October 2018 respectively. Heung Yuen Wai Boundary Control Point is expected to come into operation in 2019-20, and the front-line law enforcement departments will get prepared for the commissioning to ensure smooth operation of the new control point.

On non-refoulement claims, since the commencement of the comprehensive review of the strategy for handling non-refoulement claims in early 2016, various measures have yielded considerable results so far. The numbers of illegal immigrants and non-refoulement claims have dropped significantly by 80 per cent from the peak. The Immigration Department (ImmD) has also basically completed the screening of the backlog of over 10 000 claims. Although there are still some 6 000 appeals pending handling by the Torture Claims Appeal Board, the number is expected to drop gradually with their handling completed in two years.

The Government will continue with various suitable measures, including the submission of an amendment bill to amend the Immigration Ordinance for improving the screening procedures, and will ensure that sufficient resources are available to handle the claims and appeals efficiently and fairly, coupled with dedicated efforts into expediting the removal of the rejected

claimants from Hong Kong.

On combating TIP, in March last year, the Government established a high-level inter-bureau/departmental Steering Committee for combating TIP. It is chaired by the Chief Secretary for Administration. At the same time, an Action Plan, with 14 new measures, was promulgated. In 2019-20, the HKPF, the ImmD, the Customs and Excise Department, the Labour Department and the Department of Justice will create a total of 98 posts to continue full and vigorous implementation of various measures promulgated in the Action Plan.

On the territory-wide identity card replacement exercise, the territory-wide identity card replacement exercise commenced in December 2018. The ImmD will continue to replace the existing smart Hong Kong identity cards of all holders in phases at the nine Smart Identity Card Replacement Centres.

On fire and ambulance services, the Fire Services Department (FSD) will have 135 new posts in the new financial year, which are mainly for increasing ambulance shifts; serving as ambulance hospital controllers; operating the Rail-Road Fire Appliance procured for fire-fighting and rescue operations in railway conduits and tunnels; and strengthening the department's operational efficiency in handling maritime incidents and supporting in high-angle rescue operations, etc.

On the Fire Safety Improvement Works Subsidy Scheme, over 2 500 applications were received under the Fire Safety Improvement Works Subsidy Scheme launched last year by the Government in collaboration with the Urban Renewal Authority. Successful applicants were notified gradually, and would be assigned case officers in phases, who would provide appropriate assistance and follow-up. We hope that this subsidy scheme, together with a series of improvised measures actively promoted by the FSD, could assist owners of old composite buildings to carry out improvement works as early as practicable in order to comply with the enhanced fire safety requirements under the Fire Safety (Buildings) Ordinance.

On custody and rehabilitation, the Correctional Services Department (CSD) is committed to improving correctional facilities, including installing the electric locks systems in Stanley Prison, Tai Lam Centre for Women and Pik Uk Correctional Institution, and replacing and enhancing the closed-circuit television systems in 11 correctional facilities, including Stanley Prison, Pik Uk Prison and Hei Ling Chau Correctional Institution.

The CSD will develop the smart prison concept proactively for the sustainable development of the correctional system, using innovation and technology (including piloting the Health Signs Monitoring System, the Video Analytic Monitoring System and the Passage Surveillance System) to further modernise correctional facilities, with a view to enhancing the efficiency of prison management and level of security.

The CSD will continue to provide diversified and market-oriented vocational training to persons in custody, having regard to the overall situation and demand of the employment market, with a view to enhancing their

opportunities to find employment after release, thereby facilitating their re-integration into society.

Chairman, the representatives from departments and I are pleased to answer questions from Members.

Thank you, Chairman.