

Opening remarks by SHYA at LegCo Finance Committee special meeting

Following are the opening remarks (English translation) by the Secretary for Home and Youth Affairs, Miss Alice Mak, at the special meeting of the Legislative Council Finance Committee today (April 16):

Chairman,

I would like to brief Members on the key areas of work of the Home and Youth Affairs Bureau (HYAB) and its departments in 2024-25.

The HYAB released the Youth Development Blueprint in December 2022. Since then, we have been actively co-ordinating with various policy bureaux to implement at full steam over 160 measures under their relevant policy areas as set out in the Blueprint. Around 50 of the measures have already been completed, and most of the remaining ones are progressing well towards the set targets. In light of the latest situation of society and our youth, policy bureaux have also updated measures in the Blueprint to ensure that the Blueprint can continuously respond to the needs of young people.

In respect of youth exchange and internship, with the resumption of normal travel, the HYAB has fully resumed various schemes/programmes. We have implemented enhancement measures under a number of schemes/programmes to encourage participation of more young people from different backgrounds, so that they may broaden their horizons, acquire a better understanding of our country and the world, and develop a proper and holistic outlook.

Moreover, we plan to increase the total commitment for the Youth Development Fund (YDF) by \$300 million from its current amount of \$600 million. The YDF will, inter alia, support the launch of a new round of the Funding Scheme for Youth Entrepreneurship in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA) and the Funding Scheme for Experiential Programmes at Innovation and Entrepreneurial Bases, as well as strengthening support to youth entrepreneurs through the newly established Alliance of Hong Kong Youth Innovation and Entrepreneurial Bases in the GBA.

Under the tripartite collaboration among the Government, the business sector and the community, the 2023 Youth Festival has organised some 200 activities with an overall attendance of about 200 000. In August 2024, the HYAB will organise the Youth Development Summit as the opening and highlight of the 2024 Youth Festival. We will invite guest speakers and youth groups from the Mainland and overseas to attend the Summit, where they can exchange views and engage in mutual learning with local youth on issues of concern to young people. It is anticipated that no less than 1 000 persons will participate in the Summit.

The HYAB will continue to provide subvention to youth uniformed groups

for organising activities relating to national education, including events in support of National Security Education Day, with a view to raising young people's awareness of national security, enhancing their understanding of the Constitution, Basic Law and national security, as well as strengthening their sense of national pride and national identity through these events.

We will also continue to work closely with the Committee on the Promotion of Civic Education to promote civic and national education (including national security education) outside schools and in the community, with the aim of enhancing the sense of patriotism, civic responsibilities and awareness of the rule of law among members of the public through various channels and diverse means, such as school talks and roving exhibitions.

On April 1 this year, a dedicated Women Affairs Team was set up under the HYAB, and the post of Commissioner for Women Affairs was designated to focus on work related to women development, as well as enhancement to family building, family education and family values. Key initiatives this year include launching a one-stop family and women information portal, organising the first Family and Women Development Summit, and rolling out a new Funding Scheme on the Promotion of Family Education. We will also continue to encourage women's groups and non-governmental organisations to make good use of the Women Empowerment Fund.

Since the seventh-term District Councils took office on January 1 this year, it has set a new scene for district governance. All the District Council members work proactively to ensure effective communication between the Government and the people. They not only reflect public views and offer suggestions to the Government, but also assist the Government in promoting and explaining various policies. I look forward to continuing to work closely with the District Councils in carrying out district governance work and building a better community together.

The 452 District Services and Community Care Teams in the 18 districts have been fully activated to support the district work and strengthen community network. So far, they have visited more than 30 000 households in need, and provided them with over 7 000 times of simple support services. Care Teams pool community resources together to help in emergencies, and actively assist in policy promotion. The Government will continue to provide Care Teams with some of the resources required. The estimated provision for 2024-25 is \$180.8 million.

To further enhance the support for ethnic minorities to integrate into the community, the Home Affairs Department will establish two new support service centres for ethnic minorities (EM centres) and set up an Ethnic Minority Care Team in each of the 10 EM centres. We will also regularise the enhanced services provided by the EM centres for new arrivals and youth of ethnic minorities, and continue to implement the District-based Programmes for Racial Harmony.

My colleagues and I are happy to answer questions from Members. Thank you.