

Remarks by SHYA at media session

Following are the remarks by the Secretary for Home and Youth Affairs, Miss Alice Mak, at a media session after attending a radio programme today (June 8):

Reporter: Can you briefly recap in English how legalising the basketball betting could help combat illegal gambling and how can they support local sports development? And how much tax is expected to be generated? And also how will the government strike a balance between legalising basketball betting and also advert against gambling especially among young people in the city?

Secretary for Home and Youth Affairs: For the government, we don't encourage any kind of gambling. When combating the illegal gambling problem, we have multipronged approach. The first and the most important one is law enforcement, so through law enforcement we will take serious actions against those illegal gambling organisations and people involved in illegal gambling is in fact a criminal offense and can be subject to a penalty of \$50,000 and also nine months in jail.

The second one is public education, this is very important that we need to let Hong Kong people know the consequences of illegal gambling and we will encourage people to understand how to avoid illegal gambling and in fact gambling. We will take a series of measures and put in more efforts and resources in enhancing public education. Thirdly, for those who already have gambling problems, we will provide counselling services. Currently, we have four counselling centres carrying out these counselling services.

The fourth and last one, we can see it as a last resort. When the illegal gambling problem is so serious, we need to channel the illegal gambling to a regulated gambling regime. With illegal basketball gambling, we are also taking these four approaches. I will attend the LegCo (Legislative Council) Panel Meeting tomorrow to report on the results of the public consultation that we have conducted months ago. And during the consultation process, 90 per cent of the people who submitted their proposals, they supported the regulated basketball gambling regime, and this will be modelling on the current football gambling regime. So, tomorrow I will introduce the consultation results and will also report to the LegCo on the next step that we are going to take.

(Please also refer to the Chinese portion of the remarks.)