

## Ready for any emergency

Civil Service Newsletter Editorial Board

■ **HAVING** the ultimate responsibility for ensuring the security of the 2008 Olympic and Paralympic Equestrian Events (the Events), the Hong Kong Police Force has obviously been busy planning ahead for the Events. The Force has set up a two-tier planning structure: the Force Steering Committee to address strategic issues and to guide the overall planning process, and the Force Planning Group (FPG) to oversee and implement all operational planning/preparations and to form the nucleus command team during the execution phase of the Events.

Five working groups have been formed to support the FPG. They will be responsible for traffic, human resources, public relations, information and communications technology needs and all Events-related crime. The Police Force has also set up a Special Duty Team responsible for security planning. This comprises five Superintendents, three Chief Inspectors, three Senior Inspectors and two Sergeants. As there has been no previous event of this nature and scale in Hong Kong, there is no “blueprint” for success that can be followed.

Even the World Trade Organization (WTO)’s Sixth Ministerial Conference does not compare with the Olympic Events. Although planning for the WTO was detailed and meticulous, it was essentially a public order issue which lasted for a relatively short period, whereas the Olympics and Paralympics incorporate additional security issues, as well as the fact that the “policing period” will last for two months. There are many different stakeholders involved in the different venues and planning aspects for the Events, and there are many new challenges that the Police Force have addressed and worked through. The challenges will continue right up to the conclusion of the Events.

The Police Force is also working closely with the Beijing Organizing Committee for the Games of the XXIX Olympiad Security Department as well as other non-Government stakeholders, like the Equestrian Events (Hong Kong) of the Games of the XXIX Olympiad Company Limited and the Hong Kong Jockey Club and with international partners through Home Affairs Bureau, such as the International Olympic Committee and the Fédération Equestre Internationale.

The Fire Services Department (FSD) has an important role in ensuring public safety during the Events. The



The FSD crew conducting a CBRN (chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear) exercise at the venue of the Events in Sha Tin.

department has been busy drawing up contingency plans to deal with any outbreak of fire or other mishaps in both competition and non-competition venues.

To this end, FSD will provide fire-fighting, rescue and emergency ambulance services; arrange rescue craft to be on standby near Shing Mun River to carry out water rescues if required; advise on the fire safety designs, installations and measures of venues; and assist Hong Kong Jockey Club staff and Event Treating Veterinarians in the event of any accident involving horses.

FSD was invited to sit on the Steering Committee on Olympic and Paralympic Equestrian Events in late 2005. Two directorate officers in the department were also invited to sit on the Co-ordination Committees on Quarantine and Medical Services and Security and Accreditation. One of the directorate officers was appointed as the Departmental Contingency Officer responsible for the overall monitoring of the operational readiness of the Events.

In early April 2007, two senior FSD officers were deployed to work for the Events. They are responsible for contingency and resources planning as well as liaison and co-ordination work. These officers’ first mission was to prepare for the Good Luck Beijing — Hong Kong Special Administrative Region 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Cup held in August 2007, which was a test event of the Events.

Two additional FSD inspectorate officers were deployed in February 2008 to prepare and vet the emergency contingency plans. At present, there are a total of four officers working in conjunction with all concerned operational units and the logistics and support sections of the department to ensure their operational readiness for the Events.

Given that FSD has no previous experience in preparing emergency services for the Olympic events, a lot of time has to be spent on research work to learn from past experiences.

The team members have been interacting with many people from different sectors of the community and different parts of the world and have had to meet tight deadlines every day. Working with people of a diverse background and culture is a challenge, and the team has strived to measure up to the challenges and contribute to the best of its ability.

At present, all FSD concerned units are busy having fire drills and exercises with other government departments to enhance operational efficiency.

The Civil Aid Service (CAS) is going to have its hands full during the Events period. One of its main tasks will be crowd management at the Events and public transport interchanges as well as manning the security screening posts at the Sha Tin and Beas River venues and the Athletes Village.

As the official ticketing agent for the Events in Hong Kong, the China Travel Service (Hong Kong) Limited has already allocated some 40,000 tickets for public sale in Hong Kong out of a total of about 200,000 Olympic equestrian tickets for sale worldwide for the 13 competitions. So ensuring members of the public (as well as competitors) are safe during the events will be of utmost importance.

CAS is tasked with providing civil support services in emergencies, such as search and rescue, casualties evacuation and managing temporary shelters. Staff of the department are to assist the Security Bureau in planning, organising and conducting exercises and manning the Emergency Monitoring and Support Centre.

The department started its operation planning in early 2007 and participated in the Good Luck Beijing test event. A taskforce of 780 CAS volunteers was set up in March 2008 to handle all Events-related incidents and any emergencies that might arise. Recruiting suitable volunteers to cover the 55 days from July 20 to September 12 proved to be quite challenging for CAS, as all the volunteers have regular day-time jobs.



A detector dog seeking out contraband at the airport.

The Auxiliary Medical Service (AMS) perhaps has had an even bigger challenge on its hands, recruiting 700 AMS volunteers, including medical professionals, for 51 days of duty from July 26 to September 14.

It will also provide medical and first-aid services to athletes and the workforce in the warm-up and training areas of competition venues. Ambulance service coverage will also be provided at the Hong Kong Olympic/Paralympic Family Hotel. It started preparing for the Games in June 2006 when a co-ordination committee was formed to monitor deployment of seven officers, 76 doctors, 190 nurses and 204 Disaster Medical Assistants for the Equestrian Events.

The Customs and Excise Department (C&ED) began its preparations almost two years before the Games, assigning 35 officers in different functional areas to the task. The department shares the extremely important role of ensuring that Hong Kong remains terrorism-free during the Events. In preparation, C&ED has enhanced intelligence exchange with the Police Force on terrorist information; conducted drills with all concerned parties, e.g. Police Force, Immigration Department, Civil Aviation Department and the Airport Authority Hong Kong on contingency response procedures.

C&ED has also enhanced inspections of passengers and cargo at the airport and all boundary control points; deployed explosive-detector dogs and advanced technological equipment to assist in detecting explosive materials during passenger and cargo clearance processes; and conducted briefings and internal drills to enable frontline officers to be fully conversant with the response procedures in case of terrorist attacks.

First-aid training for AMS volunteers.