

Hon Mrs Selina CHOW to ask on 14/12/05:

It has been reported that the activities of Mainland beggar syndicates in Hong Kong have become increasingly vigorous since more citizens of Mainland cities have been permitted to visit Hong Kong under the Individual Visit Scheme, and quite a number of physically crippled or old people are begging on the streets of Central, Causeway Bay, Tsim Sha Tsui and Mong Kok, where pedestrian flow is heavy. Some of them are controlled by syndicates which keep watch for them. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- of the number of Mainland persons arrested by the police for begging in Hong Kong each year since the implementation of the Individual Visit Scheme in August 2003; the number of those who have been successfully prosecuted, and the penalty generally imposed on them by the court;
- of the information the police have about controlled Mainland beggar syndicates; whether they have established a mechanism for communicating with the Mainland public security authorities to facilitate co-operation in preventing such syndicates from coming to Hong Kong, or to prohibit Mainland persons who have been arrested for begging in Hong Kong from re-entering Hong Kong within a specified period; and
- as the Individual Visit Scheme has been further extended, since November this year, to four more cities, i.e. Chengdu, Jinan, Shenyang and Dalian and will be extended to other places of the Pan-Pearl River Delta region, of the corresponding measures to be taken by the police to prevent Mainland beggar syndicates from taking advantage of such opportunities to increase their activities in Hong Kong?

Public Officer to reply : **Secretary for Security**