

5) The New Century

Although the Third Millennium was ushered in with a World-wide party, December 31st, 1999 was “business as usual” for the Hong Kong Police as the Force prepared to meet the crowd management commitments of that night, as well as handle any of the possible “Y2K Bug” emergencies that might occur. Although the Y2K Bug did not bite, the event set the scene for the rest of the decade which was marked by major events that required thorough planning and preparation to allow for safe implementation, such as the Fortune 500 Global Forum in 2001, the 6th Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organisation in 2005, the International Telecommunication Union TELECOM WORLD 2006, the 10th Anniversary of the establishment of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) in 2007, the Equestrian Events for the Olympic and Paralympic Games in 2008, the East Asian Games in 2009 and the 15th Anniversary of the establishment of the HKSAR in 2012.

Apart from policing these major events, the Force organised various multi-national conferences, playing a pivotal role in strengthening co-operation among international law enforcement agencies and different professionals groups such as lawyers, academics and executives from the banking and finance sectors. The first multi-national conference ever organised by the Force was in 2002 on transnational organised crimes. The Force then co-hosted with Interpol the 15th Interpol Symposium for Heads of Police Training in 2005, organised the International Experience-sharing Session on Anti-Bookmaking Enforcement in 2007, the 20th INTERPOL Asian Regional Conference in 2008, and jointly hosted with the Centre for Criminology of the University of Hong Kong the Symposium on Policing Challenges in the 21st Century in 2013. The success of all these major conferences and events hosted by the Force in Hong Kong consolidated the Force international policing status, and reflected the Force commitment in collaborating with other law enforcement agencies to combat transnational organised crimes.

Regarding other law and order issues, the first decade of the new millennium also brought considerable challenges to the Force. The “September 11” terrorist attacks transformed the world and the Force has been brought to the fore in ensuring that Hong Kong remains a safe city by preventing terrorist attacks and our international financial centre from being used to fund terrorist activities. Other issues have been equally challenging. In 2003 the Force

played a key role in the response to the SARS epidemic, and in the second half of the decade placed much emphasis on combating community problems such as domestic violence and youth drug abuse. Also, cooperation with the Mainland, Macao and overseas law enforcement agencies further developed to combat syndicated and cross-boundary crime. In this decade, the Force has utilised considerable resources to fight against the ever-rising threat of technology crimes.

As a fast-paced, modern and cosmopolitan city, the challenges the Force faced remain many and varied. Yet, with the effectiveness of the Force in combating crime and keeping the city safe, the crime rates have fallen to the lowest levels in the past 40 years, earning accolades as noted in surveys conducted by a number of independent international organisations. According to the “Safety and Security” sub-index in the Legatum Prosperity Index 2015, Hong Kong was ranked top for three consecutive years among 142 countries / regions.¹ Hong Kong was ranked 4th out of 148 economies for “Reliability of Police Services” in relation to the Global Competitiveness Report 2013-2014 published by the World Economic Forum.² Hong Kong also came 7th among 102 countries / regions in the category “Order and Security” in the Rule of Law Index Report 2015 announced by the World Justice Project.³

Responding to the diversified needs of society, the Force recognised the importance of communicating with the tech-savvy millennials and launched the Hong Kong Police Mobile Application in 2012, Hong Kong Police YouTube Channel in 2013 and Hong Kong Police Facebook page in 2015 to reach out and strengthen communication and rapport with the general public and to engage the widest possible audience from different sectors of the community.

Since its creation in 1844, the Force has faced, and overcome, many challenges. Looking ahead, the Hong Kong Police Force remains committed to working in partnership with the community to maintain the safety and stability of Hong Kong. No doubt there will be new challenges in future.

¹ Legatum Institute (2015), *The 2015 Legatum Prosperity Index*, accessible via: http://media.prosperity.com/2015/pdf/publications/PI2015Brochure_WEB.pdf

² World Economic Forum, *The Global Competitiveness Report 2013-2014*, 2013, accessible via: http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GlobalCompetitivenessReport_2013-14.pdf

³ World Justice Project, *Rule of Law Index 2015*, 2015, accessible via: http://worldjusticeproject.org/sites/default/files/roli_2015_0.pdf

Cyber and technology crimes remain a concern of the Force in this era of rapid technological advancements. Upholding the integrity of the financial system of Hong Kong by combating money laundering and terrorist financing is equally important. With the global terrorist paradigm evolving across boundaries, constant vigilance against the threat of terrorism is required. The Force will continue to respond to these challenges, as it has always done, with confidence and professionalism to protect the life and property of the Hong Kong people and to continually maintain the Asia's World City as one of the safest and most stable societies in the world.

Bibliography:

1. Legatum Institute. *The 2015 Legatum Prosperity Index*. 2015.
2. World Economic Forum. *The Global Competitiveness Report 2013-2014*. 2013.
3. World Justice Project. *Rule of Law Index 2015*. 2015.