

Public consultation on Control of Obscene and Indecent  
Articles Ordinance launched

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The Government today (October 3) launched the first round of public consultations on a comprehensive review of the Control of Obscene and Indecent Articles Ordinance to widely engage all parts of the community to help shape measures to improve the regulation of obscene and indecent articles distributed over various media platforms.

At a press conference today, the Under Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Mr Gregory So, said: "It is the Government's long-standing policy to preserve the free flow of information and safeguard the freedom of expression, and at the same time protect the young and impressionable."

Enacted in the late 1980s, the ordinance generally reflects this policy. There is no pre-censorship before an article is published, but publishers have the responsibility to ensure that any publication complies with the law.

However, in the last few years, the community is increasingly concerned about the dissemination of obscene or indecent materials in print media such as entertainment magazines as well as new media such as the Internet. The latter is growing more popular especially among youngsters.

"Against this background, a comprehensive review of the ordinance is necessary to ensure that the regulatory regime is able to meet the changing needs of the community.

"Upon completion of this four-month consultation, we aim to draw together the public views and, as far as possible, come up with proposals for a second round of public consultation, " Mr So said.

Taking into account overseas practices and local experience, the Government sets out in its consultation

booklet, titled "Healthy Information for a Healthy Mind", the main issues relating to the operation of the ordinance and a wide range of areas for public discussion. These include the definitions of "obscenity" and "indecentcy"; the adjudicating system; the classification system; regulation of new forms of media; enforcement; penalty; as well as publicity and public education. Views outside these areas are also welcome.

The Government will consult extensively in various formats. Town hall meetings open to District Council Members and the public will be held. The Government will also engage representatives from various sectors, including women, youth, information technology, education, press and publication, culture and arts, civic rights and others to participate in focus group discussions for more in-depth deliberation. There will be a public opinion survey and an online discussion forum to facilitate exchange on the subject. Youth-oriented publicity will also be mounted.

The consultation booklet and relevant materials are available on the dedicated website at [www.coiao.gov.hk](http://www.coiao.gov.hk). Comments can be sent to the Commerce and Economic Development Bureau by mail to 2/F Murray Building, Garden Road, Central; by fax to 2511 1458; or by email to [info@coiao.gov.hk](mailto:info@coiao.gov.hk). The deadline for submissions is January 31, 2009.

Ends/Friday, October 3, 2008