

Legislative Council Panel on Constitutional Affairs

2003 Policy Address: Policy Agenda

Purpose

This paper introduces the priorities of the Constitutional Affairs Bureau (CAB) as set out in the Policy Agenda.

Background

2. Apart from continuing to implement “One Country, Two Systems” and to demonstrate its success, CAB has stipulated four priorities in the Policy Agenda. They are as follows.

- (a) Review the Accountability System for Principal Officials after its first year of implementation and report to the Legislative Council.
- (b) Make practical arrangements to ensure that the 2003 District Council elections are conducted in a fair, open and honest manner following the expansion in the number of elected seats.
- (c) Enact legislation to provide for the delineation of geographical constituencies and functional constituencies for the 2004 Legislative Council

elections. We will also put in place new electoral arrangements, adopt measures to facilitate the development of political parties and political groups, and support independent candidates in these elections.

- (d) Begin to make suitable preparations for the review of constitutional developments after 2007.

Accountability System for Principal Officials

3. We will, within this month, submit a report to the Constitutional Affairs Panel to provide an account on the implementation of the Accountability System for Principal Officials in the past six months. Around the middle of this year, we will also review the Accountability System after its first year of implementation and report to the Legislative Council.

2003 District Council Elections

4. The Bill proposing to increase a total of 10 elected seats in three districts (i.e Yuen Long, Sai Kung and Islands) was passed by the Legislative Council on 18 December 2002. In early January this year, the Electoral Affairs Commission published its preliminary delineation proposals for the 2003 District Council elections for one-month public consultation.

Subsidiary legislation relating to these elections would also be submitted to the Legislative Council for scrutiny in batches (the first batch of subsidiary legislation relating to voter registration was tabled at the Legislative Council on 8 January). Furthermore, in December 2002, we submitted to the Constitutional Affairs Panel a discussion paper setting out our proposals on the vote counting arrangements and election expenses limit.

2004 Legislative Council Elections

5. At a special meeting of the Constitutional Affairs Panel held on 10 December 2002, we explained to Members the arrangements on functional constituencies, provision of partial financial support for candidates and the printing of names and emblems of political parties or organisations or candidates' photographs on ballot papers in the 2004 Legislative Council elections. We will submit our proposals on geographical constituencies and election expense limits to the Constitutional Affairs Panel as soon as practicable and listen to Members' views. Our aim is to submit to the Legislative Council the Bill for the 2004 Legislative Council elections within the first quarter of this year.

Review of Constitutional Development after 2007

6. Hong Kong's future constitutional development is a

most important issue. We will begin to make suitable preparations for the review of constitutional developments after 2007. We will undertake this review according to three principles. Firstly, we will act in accordance with the relevant requirements of the Basic Law. The Basic Law provides that electoral arrangements shall be designed in the light of the actual situation in HKSAR and in accordance with the principle of gradual and orderly progress. The Basic Law also states that the ultimate aim is universal suffrage. Secondly, we will ensure that there is sufficient time for a wide consultation exercise. Thirdly, we will also leave sufficient time for the mechanisms in the Basic Law to be triggered and for any local legislation to be enacted.

Conclusion

7. Members are requested to comment on this paper.

Constitutional Affairs Bureau
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