

Panel on Constitutional Affairs

List of outstanding items for discussion
(*position as at 14 November 2007*)

**Proposed
timing for
discussion**

1. Mechanism for amending the Basic Law

Discussions on this item were held by the Panel since the 1998-99 legislative session.

To be confirmed
by CMAB

At the meeting on 17 July 2001 when the item was last discussed, the Administration advised that it was continuing discussion with the Central Authorities regarding the issues identified, particularly those relating to the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress (NPCSC), the State Council, the local NPC deputies and the Basic Law Committee.

The Administration advised on 6 October 2006 that it would revert to the Panel once it was in a position to do so.

In response to a member's request at the Panel meeting on 16 July 2007, the Administration agreed to report progress on the item in due course.

2. The question of "important bill" under Article 50 of the Basic Law

The Panel discussed the question of "important bill" under Article 50 of the Basic Law at a number of meetings since late 1999.

To be decided
by the Panel

The Panel noted the Administration's position on the following issues -

- (a) what constitutes an "important bill";
- (b) who determines whether a bill is important;
- (c) when to determine whether a bill is important; and
- (d) procedures and parties involved in the consultations under Article 50.

Given the Administration's position, the Chairman sought the views of members on the way forward at the meeting on 18 July 2005

when the item was last discussed. Hon Audrey EU suggested and members agreed that the item should remain on the outstanding list. At the meeting on 20 November 2006, members noted the background brief on the past discussions of members and developments subsequent to the meeting on 18 July 2005 prepared by the LegCo Secretariat (LC Paper No. CB(2)376/06-07(02)), and expressed no strong view on the timing for discussing the item.

3. Constitutional development

In January 2004, the Chief Executive appointed a Task Force headed by the Chief Secretary for Administration with the Secretary for Justice and Secretary for Constitutional Affairs (SCA) as members, to take forward matters relating to constitutional development. The Task Force published four reports in 2004.

On-going
discussion

On 19 October 2005, the Task Force released its Fifth Report which contained a package of proposals for amending the methods for selecting CE in 2007 and for forming LegCo in 2008. On 21 December 2005, the motions moved by the Administration on the amendments to Annexes I and II regarding the two electoral methods in 2007 and 2008 were negated.

In November 2005, the Administration entrusted the Committee on Governance and Political Development under the Commission on Strategic Development (CSD) to discuss possible models for implementing universal suffrage for selecting CE and forming LegCo. On the basis of the discussions of the CSD and the community, the Administration published the Green Paper on Constitutional Development on 11 July 2007 for public consultation until 10 October 2007.

The Panel held seven special meetings to discuss and receive public views on the Green Paper from July to early October 2007.

4. Role and development of political parties

The Panel held a discussion on the need to introduce a political party law at its meeting on 21 February 2005 and received views from deputations on the role and development of political parties at a special meeting on 26 February 2005.

To be decided
by the Panel

The Administration's position was that the introduction of a political party law would hinder the development of political parties. As one of means to facilitate political party development, the

Administration had extended the financial assistance scheme applicable to candidates in LegCo elections to candidates in the 2007 District Council election.

5. Composition, functions and operation of the Electoral Affairs Commission

On 21 June 2004, the Research Report prepared by the Research and Library Services Division on "Operation of Electoral Regulatory Bodies in Selected Places" (RP04/03-04) was presented to the Panel.

Members agreed to further explore the issues raised in the Research Report in future. The Administration advised in writing in November 2004 that it was prepared to listen to members' views at future meetings.

6. Political appointment system

As mentioned by CE in the 2005-2006 Policy Address, the Administration would consider creating a small number of new positions dedicated to political affairs so as to further improve the Accountability System for Principal Officials. The main duty would be to support CE and the Principal Officials in their political work.

To be confirmed
by CMAB

The Administration issued the Consultation Document on "Further Development of the Political Appointment System" which set out, inter alia, the proposal to create two additional layers of political appointees, namely Deputy Directors of Bureau and Political Assistants to Directors of Bureau. The Panel was briefed on the proposal at an informal meeting held on 26 July 2006 and at a special meeting on 31 July 2006. The consultation period ended on 30 November 2006.

The Report on the "Further Development of the Political Appointment System" was published on 17 October 2007. The Panel discussed the proposals set out in the Report at a special meeting on 23 October 2007. The Administration would seek the endorsement and approval of the Establishment Subcommittee and Finance Committee in November and December 2007 respectively for the creation of the proposed positions of Deputy Directors of Bureau and Political Assistants.