

LEGCO QUESTION NO. 19

(Written Reply)

Asked by: Hon Emily LAU **Date of meeting:** 8 June 2005

Replied by : Secretary for Constitutional Affairs

Question

In the Second Report of the Constitutional Development Task Force, the authorities pointed out that "to resolve the problems of governance, one critical factor is the experience and calibre of political talent". In this connection, will the Executive Authorities inform this Council:

- (a) of the measures taken in the past three years to encourage the public to take part in political affairs;
- (b) of the measures taken in the past three years to groom political talents and enhance their governance experience and calibre, as well as the effectiveness of such measures; and
- (c) whether they will introduce new measures to groom political talents so as to facilitate constitutional development and the election of the Chief Executive and all Members of this Council by universal suffrage; if so, of the details of such measures and their implementation dates; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply

Madam President,

Regarding the first part of the Honourable Emily Lau's question, in the past three years, the measures adopted by the Government to encourage public participation in political affairs include the increase of 10 directly elected seats to a total of 400 directly elected seats for the whole territory in the District Councils (DCs) election in November 2003. Increasing the number of seats enables district services to be provided to residents in newly developed regions. It can also create more opportunities for political participation by individuals who aspire to take

part in political life. Furthermore, in the Legislative Council (LegCo) election held in September 2004, the number of directly elected seats was increased to 30 in accordance with the Basic Law. In this election, we introduced the "\$10 dollar per vote" financial subsidy scheme, with the aim of encouraging more people from different backgrounds to stand for election.

Regarding the second part of the question, the Government put in place the Accountability System in July 2002, allowing talents from outside the Government, including people with a political party background, to contribute to the governance of Hong Kong through being appointed as the Principal Officials. At the same time, a number of LegCo Members with political party affiliation have also been appointed as Members of the Executive Council. This strengthens the linkage between the Government and the LegCo, and is also conducive to nurturing political talents.

At present, the some 500 advisory and statutory boards (ASBs) play a useful role in grooming political talents. The Government will continue to recruit extensively publicly spirited individuals, and appoint them to be members of these ASBs. These bodies provide a platform for people from different sectors and backgrounds to take part in public affairs, and to put forth their views in the policy formulation process. In this regard, we have already appointed more women and young people to be members of these ASBs.

In recent years, the Government has also endeavoured to enhance the scope for public participation in district matters. These include encouraging and engaging more people from the middle class, women and individuals of different background and strata to join various area committees and organisations as members. This enables them to participate in different spheres of public affairs and district work, providing an avenue for sharpening their leadership skills and grooming more community leaders and political talents. Furthermore, the Home Affairs Bureau established the Public Affairs Forum in March this year.

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This provides an additional channel for the middle class to discuss issues of public concern.

Regarding the third part of the question, we will commence a review of the roles and functions of the DCs before the end of this year. Issues to be examined include how the role of the DCs in the management of district affairs could be further strengthened. Separately, the Constitutional Development Task Force is engaging the community in the review of the methods for electing the Chief Executive in 2007 and LegCo in 2008. The Task Force plans to publish its fifth report in the latter half of 2005, outlining a mainstream proposal. If the Hong Kong community can reach consensus on how the two electoral methods should be amended in accordance with the Basic Law and the decision of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, this will provide more opportunities for political participation by individuals from different backgrounds, thus creating a more favourable environment for Hong Kong in moving towards the ultimate aim of universal suffrage.

