

CE welcomes passage of District Councils (Amendment) Bill 2023

The Chief Executive, Mr John Lee, welcomed the passage of the District Councils (Amendment) Bill 2023 (the Bill) by the Legislative Council (LegCo) today (July 6). This is an important milestone of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region's (HKSAR) work on improving district governance.

"Since 2020, a lot of the current-term District Council (DC) members acted against the functions of DCs, disrupted the conduct of meetings and unscrupulously took actions that were not in line with the functions of DCs as district advisory organisations. The chaos is a wake-up call for us. We must plug the institutional loopholes and completely exclude those anti-China and destabilising forces from the DCs. Against this backdrop, the HKSAR Government announced on May 2 the proposals on improving district governance to reform the DCs such that they could be restored to the positioning under Article 97 of the Basic Law. The proposals also fundamentally strengthened the district governance structure to enhance the efficacy of district governance. The Government introduced the Bill to the LegCo on May 31 to implement the legislative work relating to the reform of DCs," Mr Lee said.

"I am very pleased that the LegCo has efficiently completed the scrutiny of and passed the Bill within two months. I would express my sincere gratitude to the relevant bills committee of the LegCo for its dedicated deliberations and constructive suggestions. The LegCo has scrutinised the Bill meticulously, fully demonstrating the efficiency and professionalism of the LegCo formed under the improved electoral system, as well as the common goal of the executive and the legislature to build a better Hong Kong. My team and I are deeply encouraged by the unanimous passage of the Bill by the LegCo.

"Hong Kong is now in the new phase of advancing from stability to prosperity. This legislative exercise implements the principle of 'patriots administering Hong Kong' at the district governance level to ensure that the DCs are firmly in the hands of patriots, and will strictly adhere to the positioning under the Basic Law to carry out advisory and services functions, make due contributions to the Government's district governance work and effectively respond to the expectations of the public.

"I would also like to thank relevant colleagues from the Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau, the Home and Youth Affairs Bureau (HYAB), and the Department of Justice for their efforts in this legislative exercise."

The District Councils (Amendment) Ordinance 2023 will be gazetted and come into effect on July 10. The HKSAR Government will spare no effort in proceeding with the next stage of work. The Electoral Affairs Commission is now stepping up preparations for the District Council Ordinary Election. The HYAB is formulating guidelines for the operation of DCs and the performance

monitoring mechanism for DC members. The HYAB will adhere to the principle of meritocracy when recommending to the Chief Executive suitable candidates for appointment as DC members who should be capable, experienced, with relevant skill sets suited to the needs of the districts, and patriotic. We strive to bring to Hong Kong, on January 1 next year as scheduled, DCs that would start a new chapter together for Hong Kong to truly benefit the public.

Meanwhile, the HKSAR Government will also strengthen the district governance structure, promote co-ordination and co-operation in district work, and formulate and direct appropriate responses for the benefit of the general public. To this end, the Steering Committee on District Governance chaired by the Chief Secretary for Administration (CS) will hold its first meeting this month. The CS will lead the policy bureaux to conduct in-depth discussions on issues of recent concern to the public and formulate specific countermeasures, and then delegate the District Matters Co-ordination Task Force, chaired by the Deputy Chief Secretary for Administration, to work out implementation details, so as to enable the relevant policy bureaux and departments to implement the relevant plans as soon as possible within a short period. The strengthened district governance top-level structures will help the Government enhance co-ordination at the central level, improve district governance capabilities, strengthen district governance efficacy, and better respond to the needs of the public.

The HKSAR Government will continue to make every effort to implement various aspects of work relating to improving district governance and pragmatically resolve problems of the general public, with a view to bringing them a greater sense of happiness and satisfaction.