

Electoral Legislation (Miscellaneous Amendments) Bill 2018 gazetted today

The Electoral Legislation (Miscellaneous Amendments) Bill 2018 was published in the Gazette today (June 29). The Bill amends certain electoral legislation to improve the voter registration (VR) arrangements, and the electoral procedures for the Chief Executive, Election Committee Subsector, Legislative Council (LegCo), District Council and Rural Representative elections.

"We are preparing for the elections in the next election cycle, and have reviewed the electoral legislation in the light of the experience gained. We propose to introduce certain amendments through the Electoral Legislation (Miscellaneous Amendments) Bill 2018," a Government spokesman said.

In addition, the Bill proposes to enhance the VR system, including increasing maximum penalties for offences relating to VR to strengthen the deterrent effect, and improving the VR claim and objection mechanism so as to process relevant cases more effectively and minimise the chance of any possible abuse. The Bill also proposes to broaden the pool of eligible candidates for appointment as Revising Officer to include former and retired magistrates, in order to allow more flexibility for the Judiciary to make suitable appointment of Revising Officers.

Furthermore, the Bill proposes to introduce a targeted exemption of the criminal liability in respect of a third party who incurs merely electricity and Internet access charges in publishing election advertisements on the Internet, to safeguard the freedom enjoyed by the public in their daily expression of views on the Internet under the premise of upholding the fairness of elections, and to rationalise electoral procedures and improve the clarity and consistency of certain electoral legislation.

"We plan to introduce the Bill into the LegCo for first and second readings on July 11, 2018. We hope that the Bill can be passed within 2018, so that the amendments to enhance the voter registration and electoral procedures can come into effect as soon as possible," the spokesman said.

The Bill and details of the proposals have been made available at the LegCo webpage.