

Government to resume Second Reading debate of 10 bills

The Chief Secretary for Administration, Mr Matthew Cheung Kin-chung, today (May 12) wrote to the Chairman of the Legislative Council (LegCo) House Committee (HC), Ms Starry Lee, indicating the Government's intention to resume Second Reading debate of 10 Government Bills at the LegCo meeting on May 27 and to first proceed with the National Anthem Bill and the Trade Marks (Amendment) Bill 2019 at this juncture.

Mr Cheung said, "The Government is pleased to note that the HC at its Special Meeting held in the afternoon of May 8 handled a number of bills and subsidiary legislation which had been held in abeyance for seven months. The Government is also pleased to see that the impasse in the HC has been unlocked and will fully co-operate with LegCo in its proceedings on the legislative items in the remainder of the current term of LegCo."

The current legislative session will end in just about two months. All the bills which cannot complete the scrutiny process by the end of the current session in July this year will lapse upon the end of the current term of LegCo. At present, there are 26 bills under LegCo's scrutiny. After the HC Special Meeting held last Friday, 10 Government Bills are ready for resumption of Second Reading debate as and when appropriate.

The Government considers that LegCo should first proceed with the National Anthem Bill and the Trade Marks (Amendment) Bill 2019 at this juncture. The Bills Committees of these two bills had reported to the HC on the outcomes of their scrutiny as early as last year. As regards the remaining eight bills, the relevant procedures were completed at the HC Special Meeting last Friday. The Government has prioritised the order of resumption of Second Reading debate of these bills as set out in the Annex.

"The national anthem is the symbol and sign of the country. The National Anthem Bill seeks to implement the Law of the People's Republic of China on National Anthem (the National Anthem Law). The National Anthem Law was passed in September 2017 and added to Annex III of the Basic Law in November 2017. According to Article 18 of the Basic Law, the national laws listed in Annex III of the Basic Law shall be applied locally by way of promulgation or legislation by the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR). It is thus the constitutional responsibility of the HKSAR Government to implement the National Anthem Law locally as soon as practicable. The legislative principle of the National Anthem Bill is to fully reflect the legislative purpose and intent of the National Anthem Law, which is to preserve the dignity of the national anthem so that members of the community would respect the national anthem, whilst taking into account Hong Kong's common law system and actual circumstances," Mr Cheung stressed.

As regards the Trade Marks (Amendment) Bill 2019, Mr Cheung said, "The

Bill seeks to amend the Trade Marks Ordinance (Cap. 559) to provide a basis for the application of the Protocol Relating to the Madrid Agreement Concerning the International Registration of Marks in due course. It will enable businesses to obtain and manage international trade mark registrations in a more convenient and more cost-effective manner. It is also in line with the Government's commitment to enhance Hong Kong's intellectual property regime."

The public officers in charge of the bills will, in accordance with the relevant requirements as set out in Rule 54(5) of the Rules of Procedure, give notice in writing delivered to the office of the Clerk after consultation with the HC Chairman to resume the Second Reading debate on the aforementioned 10 bills at the Council meeting of May 27.

"The HKSAR Government hopes to work closely together with LegCo Members to make the best use of time in concluding the legislative procedures of the above bills in the remainder of the current term of LegCo in accordance with the priorities," Mr Cheung said.