

LCQ21: Advisory and statutory bodies

Following is a question by Hon Jimmy Ng and a written reply by the Secretary for Home Affairs, Mr Lau Kong-wah, in the Legislative Council today (October 31):

Question:

The Chief Executive stated in her Policy Address delivered in October 2017 that she had "called upon all policy bureaux to uphold the principle of meritocracy and cast their net wide in scouting for talents. Anyone with ability and the commitment to serve the community will stand a chance to join various statutory and advisory bodies and tender advice to the Government". Regarding the statutory and advisory bodies (SABs) in Hong Kong, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether the Government compiled statistics in the past three years on the political affiliations of members of various SABs; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(2) as there are comments that as the society of Hong Kong has become increasingly diversified, the Government needs to listen to the views of various stakeholders in the process of policy formulation, whether the Government reviewed in the past three years the roles of SABs in policy formulation; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(3) given that the Government has launched, one after another since last year, the Pilot Member Self-recommendation Scheme for Youth and the Member Self-recommendation Scheme for Youth, but only 15 advisory committees are covered by such schemes, representing 3 per cent of the approximately 490 SABs in Hong Kong, whether the Government will review the effectiveness of such schemes and introduce improvements, e.g. relaxing the age restriction as well as gradually opening up all SABs for self-recommendation by young people; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

My reply to Hon Jimmy Ng's question is as follows.

(1) The Home Affairs Bureau (HAB) maintains the personal particulars of most members serving on advisory and statutory bodies (ASBs). Some of them have declared their political affiliation. But as such information is provided by individual members on a voluntary basis, we do not have comprehensive statistics on the political affiliation of all ASB members.

(2) As a key component in public administration, ASBs play an important role of assisting the Government in the consultation with stakeholders, formulation of policy objectives and performance of statutory functions. At

present, there are about 490 ASBs in Hong Kong. The system of ASBs is multi-faceted, including various advisory boards and committees, public bodies, appeal boards and regulatory bodies. Through these bodies, various sectors of the community and relevant organisations may express their views at various stages in the making of policies and planning of public services by the Government.

The appointments of individuals by the Government as non-official members to ASBs are based on merits. When appointing a member to serve on an ASB, the relevant bureau or department (B/D) takes into account the candidate's ability, expertise, experience, integrity and commitment to public service, with due regard to the functions and nature of business of the ASB as well as the statutory requirements for the membership of the statutory body concerned.

To gauge a wide range of public views, when appointing members to serve on these bodies, the Government will, apart from taking into account the needs of the ASB concerned, consider people of various background and experience, such as professionals, academics, businessmen as well as representatives from districts and related sectors. Apart from those appointed directly by the Government, some ASB members are identified through nomination, recommendation, appointment or election by the relevant institutions and professional organisations.

The Government has been keeping a close watch over the arrangements on appointment of ASB members to make sure that such arrangements meet the needs of the community today. To enable ASBs to fully cater for the increasingly diversified society, the HAB, while upholding the principle of appointment by merits, has established guidelines for B/Ds on the appointment of members to ASBs to make sure that individuals from various sectors have the opportunity to serve the community through working in ASBs. According to the guidelines, B/Ds, as a general rule, shall not recommend appointment of a non-official member to serve on more than six ASBs at the same time or to serve on the same body for more than six years in the same capacity. This is to ensure a reasonable distribution of workload and a healthy turnover of members. Moreover, the Government has set a gender benchmark target of 35 per cent to enhance the participation of women in ASBs. To provide more opportunities for young people to participate in policy discussion and debate, the Government has set a target of increasing, within the current-term Government, the overall ratio of appointed youth members aged between 18 and 35 to 15 per cent.

(3) The Government creates, through various initiatives, a favourable environment for young people to join different ASBs for participating in public affairs. Such initiatives include the regularisation of the Pilot Member Self-recommendation Scheme for Youth (Pilot Scheme) launched last year to recruit regularly young people, who are aged between 18 and 35 and passionate about serving the community, to join more ASBs. Under the regularised Member Self-recommendation Scheme for Youth (MSSY), the Government will roll out two rounds of recruitment every year. The number of participating committees covering various policy areas will increase and exceed 15. The Pilot Scheme and the first phase of the regularised MSSY have

received about 1 100 and 1 500 applications respectively. In addition to the seats open for recruitment under the Pilot Scheme and MSSY, the Government has invited those applicants attending the interviews to authorise the HAB to include their personal particulars in the Central Personality Index (CPI) database so that relevant B/Ds may retrieve the information for reference during their selection of candidates for appointment as members of ASBs. The number of young people in the CPI database was only about 940 before the launch of the Pilot Scheme (i.e. October last year), and the number has increased significantly to about 2 770 at present. The proportion of appointed youth members has also increased from 7.8 per cent as at the end of last year to the current level of 9 per cent and the progress is satisfactory.