

LCQ3: Strengthening the cooperation with the Council after the improvement of the electoral system

Following is a question by Dr the Hon Priscilla Leung and a reply by the Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs, Mr Erick Tsang Kwok-wai, in the Legislative Council today (May 18):

Question:

The current-term Legislative Council (LegCo) is the first LegCo formed after the improvement of the electoral system. The number of seats has increased by 20 from the previous term and an Election Committee constituency is newly added. Nearly 40 Members of LegCo are non-partisan. Some analyses have pointed out that the discussion atmosphere in LegCo has changed from one where two political camps were in confrontation with each other in the past to one where issues are examined in greater depth, with more refined proposals being put forward to the Government. In addition, the new Council structure and composition of Members have enabled reforms and government motions which are genuinely in the interest of the community at large to stand a better chance of gaining the support of the Council. In the past few months, the cross-party and multi-disciplinary collaboration among Members from different backgrounds on various livelihood issues has played a positive role in driving the Government to make policy improvements. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) since the commencement of the current term of LegCo, how the Government, under the new situation, makes good use of the new Council culture after the improvement of the electoral system to actively resolve some of the thorny livelihood issues for Hong Kong;

(2) under the new situation, how the Government steps up its efforts on consulting and explaining to various sectors of the community and members of the public government policies, so as to boost the Government's credibility and public support; and

(3) under an executive-led political system, how the Government engages in healthy interaction with LegCo which focuses on the quality of deliberation and the standard of proposals, so that the governing team can embrace high quality proposals from Members as an integral part of its governance of Hong Kong?

Reply:

President,

By reconstituting the Election Committee (EC) and endowing it with new

functions, the improved electoral system has increased the balanced and orderly political participation in the Hong Kong society and to make the political system more broadly representative. In addition, the scale of the Legislative Council (LegCo) has been enlarged with the number of Members being increased from 70 to 90. In terms of composition, Members returned by the EC, functional constituencies and geographical constituencies through direct elections have resulted in a wider and more balanced coverage of the LegCo and a greater diversity of voices and opinions. At the same time, a qualification reviewing mechanism has been established to ensure that candidates meet the requirements of being a patriot, thus forming a new democratic electoral system that is in line with the actual situation in Hong Kong and carries Hong Kong's characteristics. Under the new system, the principle of "patriots administering Hong Kong" is fully implemented, enabling the executive and the legislature to resume rational interaction, so that the HKSAR Government can practically resolve various deep-rooted problems in the society relating to people's livelihood and the economy, and achieve good governance and long-term stability.

On December 19 last year, the 2021 LegCo General Election was conducted in accordance with the law in a fair, open, honest and efficient manner. Over 1.3 million electors cast their votes and 90 Members were elected from 153 candidates of different backgrounds and political views, demonstrating the broad representation, political inclusiveness, balanced participation and fair competition of the new electoral system.

In response to Dr the Hon Priscilla Leung's question, having consulted the Chief Secretary for Administration's Office, the Financial Services and the Treasury Bureau and the Information Services Department, our consolidated reply is as follows.

(1) A strong executive-legislature relationship with healthy interactions is essential to achieving good governance of the HKSAR. The Government is delighted that the seventh-term LegCo has been effectively fulfilling and observing the constitutional functions of the Legislature under the Basic Law. This enables the realisation of "restoring order from chaos, bringing prosperity by governing" in Hong Kong, and also ensures the steadfast and successful implementation of "one country, two systems".

Since the commencement of the current-term LegCo on January 1 this year, Members have offered valuable and constructive views and suggestions on various policy purview and issues which are of public's concern.

When it comes to taking forward legislative proposals, the Government has introduced a total of ten Bills into LegCo, including the two Bills to be introduced for First and Second Reading later on at today's Council meeting. These ten Bills include legislative proposals that, in light of the rapidly rising epidemic, the Government introduces to step up the support to the members of the public and businesses who were affected by the epidemic. Three Bills have been scrutinised and passed by LegCo so far under its efficient operation.

The current term Government would strive to introduce about 10 other Bills which seek to improve people's livelihood and promote economic development before the end of its term on June 30 this year. These legislative proposals include, inter alia, the Residential Care Homes Legislation (Miscellaneous Amendments) Bill and Copyright (Amendment) Bill 2022. These are among the legislative proposals set out in the Chief Executive's 2021 Policy Address. They reflect the results of the extensive consultations conducted by relevant bureaux with their stakeholders in the sector as well as LegCo Members. We believe that LegCo will surely continue to complete scrutinising the Bills in a serious, detailed and efficient manner for their early enactment, so as to actively resolve some of the social, economic and livelihood issues for Hong Kong.

On the 4th of this month, the LegCo passed by an overwhelming majority the first Budget after improving the electoral system. During the scrutiny process, Members fully demonstrated the new atmosphere of rational and professional deliberation and healthy interaction between the executive and the legislature. With the enhanced cooperation between the Government and the LegCo, the various relief measures in the Budget can be implemented early, giving impetus to the Hong Kong economy, which has been badly hit by the fifth wave of the epidemic, to stimulate consumption and boost the economy. Separately, in regard to financial proposals, as at 29 April 2022, the Finance Committee (FC) has approved in total seven funding proposals amounting to around \$95.3 billion, including convening additional meetings to consider the injection of \$27 billion and \$43 billion into the Anti-epidemic Fund for implementing the sixth round of relief measures and 2022 Employment Support Scheme respectively. Owing to the support of the FC, the Government was able to secure the funding expeditiously to provide timely support for the businesses and individuals hard hit by the epidemic. In the remaining term of office of the current term Government, the Government will continue to submit other funding proposals relating to people's livelihood to the FC, including the establishment and financial proposals in relation to the re-organisation of the Government structure, for the Council's scrutiny and consideration.

The HKSAR Government will continue to engage in in-depth exchanges with the LegCo so as to safeguard the constitutional order of Hong Kong and the overall interests of the society, thereby ensuring the long-term prosperity and stability of Hong Kong.

(2) Senior officials of the HKSAR Government have been actively explaining the Government's policies to different sectors of the community, and have been widely promoting them through various channels, including explaining to the public the policy considerations, implementation details, impact on the society and the public, in the hope of gaining public trust and support, in order to enhance the administrative effectiveness and benefit the public. All bureaux and departments closely monitor public opinion and information disseminated on different platforms in order to make appropriate responses. For rumours and inaccurate information, the Government will take the initiative to clarify and refute the fallacies promptly through various means, such as press releases, online and social media platforms or

briefings. The Government will continue to strengthen and work on the policy promotion and information dissemination.

(3) Under the principle of "patriots administering Hong Kong", Members of the new term LegCo shoulder the important responsibility of participating in the governance of Hong Kong together with the HKSAR Government. The Government attaches great importance to the executive-legislative relationship, and will work closely with LegCo Members to facilitate their work, including scrutinising bills, funding approval, raising questions and motion debates, so as to promote the positive and interactive executive-legislative relationship for the benefit of all Hong Kong people.

The Chief Executive regularly attends Question and Answer Sessions and Question Time to respond directly to Members' questions. Also through the Chief Secretary for Administration's regular meetings with Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the House Committee, the Government maintains close liaison and communication with the LegCo. The Government's entire political team will continue to actively liaise and interact with the LegCo, and will conduct formal or informal exchanges with Members as early as possible in the policy formulation process. The relevant LegCo Panels will be consulted. The team will incorporate feasible suggestions with an open and pragmatic attitude and strive to balance the interests of different sectors and social strata, with a view to forging a consensus in the community and building a brighter future for Hong Kong.

The Government will make its best effort, together with all Members, to protect the sovereignty, security and development interests of our country, and also strive to enhance the effectiveness of the HKSAR's governance for serving members of the public in a pragmatic manner and seeking happiness for them. We will win public recognition by achieving actual outcomes under the improved electoral system. The new system shall give full play to its superiority, so as to fully demonstrate the new landscape of executive and the legislature administering Hong Kong with one mind under "patriots administering Hong Kong".