

Policy Address promotes enhanced governance to meet social expectations

The Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam, today (October 6) in the Policy Address, titled "Building a Bright Future Together", proposed that the current-term Government shall prepare a proposal to re-organise the government structure for consideration and implementation by the next-term Government to promote the effective implementation of policies, review the selection and appointment mechanism for the senior levels of the civil service to uphold the principle of meritocracy, build a stronger relationship between the Government and the legislature, and enhance the Government's capability in information dissemination and public communication.

"I am of the view that there is still a need to re-organise the policy bureaux to complement our policy focuses and meet social expectations," Mrs Lam said.

The Chief Executive proposed that the current-term Government shall consult various sectors and stakeholders in the coming months to work out a detailed re-organisation proposal for consideration and implementation by the next-term Government. She outlined her vision for re-organising the government structure in the following directions:

- * set up a Culture, Sports and Tourism Bureau to consolidate the culture portfolio and the creative industries and tourism portfolio currently under the Home Affairs Bureau (HAB) and the Commerce and Economic Development Bureau respectively;

- * split the Transport and Housing Bureau to provide a more dedicated high-level steer for these two major policy areas, enabling in particular the new Transport Bureau to focus on transport infrastructure, public transport services and traffic management;

- * explore whether there is room to rationalise the work of the Housing Bureau upon the split and the Development Bureau (DEVB), which is responsible for land development and public works, in order to expedite land supply for housing;

- * expand the Innovation and Technology Bureau into the Innovation, Technology and Industry Bureau to change the perception that local industries are declining and highlight the role of innovation and technology in promoting the development of re-industrialisation in Hong Kong; and

- * re-organise the HAB into the Youth and District Affairs Bureau to step up efforts to address district issues of daily concern to the public with a district-based approach, and to provide a one-stop platform for promoting and supporting youth development.

"I hope that the new-term Legislative Council (LegCo) may commence discussion on the re-organisation of policy bureaux immediately upon its formation," Mrs Lam said.

When introducing the Northern Metropolis Development Strategy, the Chief Executive also suggested the possible option of creating a Deputy Secretary of Department post in the next-term Government to steer large-scale regional developments such as the Northern Metropolis and the Lantau Tomorrow Vision.

Mrs Lam said that Permanent Secretaries and Heads of Departments, who are at the highest echelons of the civil service, also play a critical role in the effective implementation of policies in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR). She said that the existing selection and appointment mechanism for the senior levels of the civil service would be reviewed by the Civil Service Bureau in the coming months with a view to appointing the most visionary and competent officers to the most suitable positions.

The Chief Executive has also suggested to Directors of Bureaux that they may create more dedicated commissioner posts with specific responsibilities to take forward the relevant work, adding that the creation of current posts such as Commissioner for Heritage, Commissioner for Sports and Commissioner for the Development of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, is bearing fruit.

"The post of Commissioner for Children, for example, should be conducive to helping the Labour and Welfare Bureau promote child protection, whereas the post of Commissioner for Harbourfront should facilitate the beautification of the harbourfront by the DEVB, both within and outside the Government," Mrs Lam said.

Regarding strengthening training for civil servants, the Chief Executive said a Civil Service College would be established in its interim accommodation by the end of this year, to put in place a more systematic training framework and arrange for more middle and senior-level civil servants to take part in national studies programmes or thematic visits in the Mainland.

Mrs Lam said that, from some time in the past, the politics in the LegCo had become so extreme that it had seriously damaged the otherwise constructive and interactive relationship between the Government and the legislature. Along with the Policy Address, the Chief Executive announced 40 legislative proposals for early discussion at the community level, to ensure that the LegCo can better perform its role in conveying public opinion. The proposals include introducing a mandatory reporting mechanism for child-abuse prevention, streamlining the statutory procedures for land development and strengthening regulation over the service quality of residential care homes for the elderly and persons with disabilities.

On enhancing the Government's capability in information dissemination and public communication, Mrs Lam said the effective dissemination of

government information is an important aspect of governance, and an area that warrants the HKSAR Government's immediate improvements. She has requested all Secretaries of Departments and Directors of Bureaux, with the support of the Director of Information Services and his team, to place more emphasis on information dissemination and public communication on government policies.