

Government introduced Race Discrimination Bill

The following is the statement by the Secretary for Home Affairs, Dr Patrick Ho, on the Race Discrimination Bill today (November 29):

"The Race Discrimination Bill will be published in the Gazette on December 1 and introduced into the Legislative Council on December 13.

The introduction of the Bill signifies a major stride in the Government's continuing endeavours and commitment in the promotion of racial harmony.

It also shows the Government's firm commitment to safeguard the rights of people against racial discrimination. The proposed legislation will reaffirm the Government's commitment to human rights.

The main objective of the Bill is two-fold:

- * To make racial discrimination and harassment in prescribed areas and vilification on the ground of race unlawful and to prohibit serious vilification on that ground; and
- * To extend the jurisdiction of the Equal Opportunities Commission to cover racial discrimination.

The Bill also seeks to prohibit racial discrimination and harassment in six areas of activities - employment; education; provision of goods, facilities, services and premises; election and appointment to public bodies; pupilage and tenancy by, and instructions to barristers; and membership and access to clubs.

We wish to assure our ethnic minorities that the Government is concerned about their rights and well-being. The prosperity of Hong Kong is founded, among other things, on its cosmopolitan nature and contribution of its people from different background and ethnic origins. Racial harmony is an important cornerstone for social harmony.

The Bill demonstrates the Government's unwavering determination and efforts in promoting a culture of acceptance, mutual understanding and respect among people of different races, which I believe is the quintessence of a harmonious society.

This legislation must go hand in hand with public education and support for better integration. In this connection, the Government will continue its endeavours in funding and support for promotion of racial harmony and integration of the ethnic minorities in Hong Kong.

While it is important to make legislation against racial discrimination, it is also important that the society maintains compassion and care for different races."

Ends/Wednesday, November 29, 2006