

Government sets up Public Affairs Forum

The Government today (March 10) announced the establishment of the Public Affairs Forum, a consultative forum to advise the Government on major public issues in Hong Kong.

The Public Affairs Forum website was launched at the same time.

"This is an initiative flowing from the 2004 Policy Address of the Chief Executive," a Home Affairs Bureau spokesman said.

"The setting up of the Public Affairs Forum shows that the Government attaches great importance to the middle class, appreciates their values and beliefs, as well as their aspirations to participate in public affairs," the spokesman said.

Members of the Forum are mainly salaried employees from the business, professional and academic fields who have attained tertiary education level or obtained professional qualifications. They regard themselves as members of the middle class, and the community in general regard them as such.

"The Public Affairs Forum has adopted a new mode of operation through a dedicated website which provides a platform for exchange of views among Forum members. Such an arrangement allows Forum members maximum flexibility in carrying out discussions.

"We plan to appoint about 600 members. In identifying suitable people for appointment to the Forum, regard is given to the need to have a balanced gender composition and a balanced representation from different sectors," he said.

So far, about 340 people have agreed to serve as Forum members and the membership list has been posted on the Public Affairs Forum website (<http://www.forum.gov.hk>).

"We shall continue to identify suitable people for appointment to the Forum," the spokesman said.

Discussion topics, consultation papers and online polls will be posted on the Forum website for comments and voting. Discussion topics on discrimination against new arrivals from the Mainland and discrimination on the ground of sexual orientation are now open for discussion.

People are welcome to visit the Forum website. However, access to the Forum Discussion Room will be restricted to Forum members.

Ends/Thursday, March 10, 2005

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