

# Effective governance

Civil Service Newsletter Editorial Board

THE Administration is committed to maintaining a small, responsive and accountable government, according to the Policy Agenda released following the Chief Executive's Policy Address to the Legislative Council in January.

In sustaining efforts to further improve the capacity of the civil service to meet the challenges ahead, the Administration has pledged in the Policy Agenda to continue providing civil servants with robust training and development opportunities. New elements will be introduced into the senior executive development programmes. More national studies programmes will be rolled out.

"We shall also continue to enhance the variety and content of the training materials on our e-learning portal, and promote wider use of e-learning, as part of our endeavours to fortify a culture of continuous learning in the civil service. We shall encourage staff at all levels to pursue learning through an expanded sponsorship scheme," the Policy Agenda stated.

It added that the Administration would continue to maintain and enhance the morale of the civil service through wider consultation between management and staff at all levels, and encourage fuller use of the commendation system to recognise and motivate exemplary performance.



The Chief Executive, Tung Chee Hwa, meeting the media after delivering his 2005 Policy Address to the Legislative Council.

The list of ongoing initiatives in the Agenda includes reference to the efforts that are being made to develop an improved civil service pay adjustment mechanism in 2005-06 so that it will meet the policy to maintain a clean, stable and efficient civil service which will also be considered as fair and reasonable by the community. The exercise will include conducting a pay level survey, reviewing the annual pay trend survey and developing a better mechanism to facilitate both upward and downward pay adjustments in future. An extensive consultation on the methodology of the proposed pay level survey and the application of the survey results has been completed and the survey field work will be conducted in early 2005.

It added that facilitating the maintenance of a lean and efficient civil service and reduction of the civil service establishment to about 160,000 by 2006-07 will continue by providing the necessary staff management tools to assist bureaux and departments to achieve staff savings.

## Strengthening the District Officers' role

In his Annual Address, the Chief Executive, Tung Chee Hwa, specifically mentioned enhancing the role of District Officers in strengthening grass-roots liaison.

"We will continue with our efforts to uphold the vision of 'people-based' governance. We will gauge the mood of the people more accurately and listen more closely to their opinions. We will also engage more representatives of various groups to join advisory bodies," said Mr Tung.

"This year," continued Mr Tung, "we will review the functions and other aspects of District Councils and enhance our support for them. We will attach importance to how the 18 District Officers may better play their role. We will help them resolve community problems in a practical manner, referring them if necessary to higher levels for expeditious resolution.

"I have asked the Principal Officials to fully support the District Officers to enable them to function more effectively. We will live the 'people-based' service culture, pay constant attention to public aspirations and respond actively," said Mr Tung.

## Enhancing the Accountability System

He added that the operation of the Accountability System will be enhanced to demonstrate team spirit. While the Principal Officials were responsible for different policy areas, they collectively discussed important policy decisions and coordinated with each other in implementing policies.

"We will continue to reinforce the policy research capability within the Government. We will allocate, for each of the next three years, an additional \$20 million to the University Grants Committee, which will in turn task its Research Grants Council with promoting public policy research in higher education institutions. We attach great importance to engaging people from different sectors, particularly the middle class and professionals, in the formulation of public policies. We will better co-ordinate the determination of priorities for new policies.

"We will strengthen our communication with the media, better gauge public reaction to policies and respond promptly. We will safeguard public interests, resolve conflicts and actively enlist the support of different sectors of the community," pledged Mr Tung.