

For discussion on
18 May 2026

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL PANEL ON PUBLIC SERVICE

Commendation Schemes for Civil Servants

Purpose

The Government has endeavoured to encourage civil servants to strive for excellence and provide quality public service through various commendation schemes. This paper reports to Members the relevant schemes and the latest progress of their implementation.

Background

2. The civil service is the backbone of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (“HKSAR”) Government. Its capability and efficiency is the key to success in the implementation of the Government’s policies. Under the leadership of the Chief Executive, the current-term Government is committed to taking forward reforms of our governance system to strengthen governance effectiveness. We have been instilling in the civil service a culture that emphasises proactiveness, commitment, dedication and loyalty. We have also been proposing various policy measures to continuously enhance the civil service management regime, including advancing the reward and punishment system, with a view to building a highly efficient and professional civil service dedicated to serving the community. In commending civil servants for their outstanding performance, the Civil Service Bureau (“CSB”) launched the Chief Executive’s Award for Exemplary Performance in 2023 and enhanced the Secretary for the Civil Service’s Commendation Award Scheme in 2024, thereby giving recognition to exemplary teams or individuals who can serve as role models and encouraging more young colleagues of high calibre to leverage their strengths and serve the public in their respective posts. CSB will continue to give due recognition to civil servants with outstanding performance and dedication to serving the community through various commendation schemes for civil servants.

3. The above commendation schemes are intended to give recognition to civil servants with outstanding performance. Receiving commendation is a significant affirmation of their work and a great honour for the awardees.

While no awards in kind are provided under most commendation schemes, the awardees serve as role models for encouraging others to strive for excellence in providing public services continuously.

Commendation Schemes for Civil Servants

(a) Chief Executive’s Award for Exemplary Performance

4. The Government launched the Chief Executive’s Award for Exemplary Performance in 2023 to give recognition to exemplary teams or individuals. Acclaimed contributions may cover a wide variety of areas, such as spearheading reform in organisational culture, accomplishing “missions impossible” by overcoming obstacles, saving resources while substantially enhancing efficiency, and exceeding requirements and targets of important tasks. The performance of the teams or individuals to be acclaimed each time has to be outstanding enough to warrant commendation.

5. Two teams were awarded the Chief Executive’s Award for Exemplary Performance¹ for 2025 in July last year, namely the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Search and Rescue Team to quake-stricken areas in Myanmar (“HKSAR Search and Rescue Team”), and the Inter-departmental Preparation Team for Kai Tak Sports Park Commissioning (“Preparation Team for KTSP Commissioning”). Award-winning members of the HKSAR Search and Rescue Team consisted of civil servants from the Security Bureau, the Fire Services Department and the Immigration Department. During the major earthquake in Myanmar in March 2025, the HKSAR Search and Rescue Team rushed to Mantalay, one of the most devastated areas in Myanmar to conduct search and rescue operations. The team completed 61 search and rescue operations covering 57 locations amid constant aftershocks and scorching heat in the disaster-stricken areas, and conducted joint operations with the China Search and Rescue Team, successfully rescuing one survivor who had been trapped for more than 125 hours. In addition, the team excavated two bodies from the debris. This has fully demonstrated excellent teamwork and set a role model for the civil service.

¹ In 2023, the Chief Executive’s Award for Exemplary Performance was granted to the HKSAR search and rescue team that carried out search and rescue operations in quake-stricken areas in Türkiye. In 2024, the Chief Executive’s Award for Exemplary Performance was granted to the Task Force on Basic Law Article 23 Legislation comprising the Department of Justice, the Security Bureau and the Hong Kong Police Force.

6. The Preparation Team for KTSP Commissioning consisted of staff from the Culture, Sports and Tourism Bureau, the Security Bureau, CSB, the Transport and Logistics Bureau, the Hong Kong Police Force and the Transport Department. The Preparation Team for KTSP Commissioning completed about 20 test events in just five months for KTSP, the largest sports infrastructure project ever commissioned in Hong Kong, including five large-scale drills, mobilising about 140 000 civil servants to participate in the stress tests to evaluate the capability of KTSP and its surrounding facilities comprehensively. The Preparation Team was well prepared for the successful grand opening ceremony of KTSP on 1 March 2025 and the subsequent large-scale events, underlining the exceptional competence and effective performance of civil servants.

7. We widely publicised the award-winning good stories of the two winning teams through diversified channels, including a 23-minute television special jointly produced with the Radio Television Hong Kong (“RTHK”) which premiered on RTHK TV 31 during the prime time (i.e. from 8:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.) in August 2025. The television special was also arranged for repeated broadcast on RTHK TV 31 and 32 in the subsequent two months. Besides, the video was uploaded onto social media platforms and arranged for broadcast at MTR stations and train compartments as well as over 500 government venues. Moreover, there was extensive media coverage on the outstanding performance of the award-winning teams by over 30 Hong Kong and Mainland electronic, printed and online media agencies, effectively promoting the public’s understanding of the award-winning good stories.

(b) The Secretary for the Civil Service’s Commendation Award Scheme

8. The Secretary for the Civil Service (“SCS”) gives recognition each year to selected civil servants on a service-wide basis for their consistently outstanding performance under this scheme which is specific to the civil service. To qualify for an award under the scheme, a civil servant should have put up outstanding performance at least in the last five years consecutively. The target number of recipients per annum is 100, i.e. only six civil servants receiving the commendation award in every 10 000 civil servants. Nominations are made by Permanent Secretaries or Heads of Departments/Grades. Recipients of awards are selected by SCS on the recommendation of an Award Committee comprising representatives of CSB and other bureaux/grades. Each award recipient receives a certificate of recognition and a commemorative award. The Government has lifted the minimum service length requirement for granting of travel awards to awardees from 2024 onwards. As long as the award recipients have yet to receive a

travel award, they can be granted a travel award under this award scheme irrespective of their years of service². The clear message is that the Government values the contributions made by civil servants, rather than their years of service. Those with shorter years of service and outstanding performance also deserve recognition. The award granted will be recorded in the personal file of the recipients to recognise their outstanding performance.

9. In 2025, 100 civil servants from 39 bureaux/departments (“B/Ds”) were commended, covering 55 different grades, including professional and technical grades, disciplined services and general grades. Among them, a total of 16 civil servants with less than 20 years of service received the travel award in light of the enhancement measure, with four more such awardees compared with those in 2024 when the enhancement measure was first launched. The most junior one had only eight years of service. We hope that the above enhancement measure can further motivate civil servants (including those with shorter service) to strive for excellence.

(c) Long and Meritorious Service Travel Award Scheme

10. The Long and Meritorious Service Travel Award Scheme aims at recognising and awarding serving civil servants with long and meritorious service. All local non-directorate officers with a continuous service of 20 years or more and a track record of consistently very good performance are eligible for consideration for the grant of an award. Civil servants may only be awarded once in their civil service career. The award is granted on a reimbursement basis. The awardees can flexibly choose to nominate a travelling companion, and use the granted amount for a single trip, which is \$27,250 per person in the 2026-27 financial year. The number of awards for each year is determined on the basis of one award for every 27 officers meeting the length of service requirement (i.e. at a ratio of 1:27). In the 2026-27 financial year, there are about 1 400 award quotas. In most circumstances, the number of eligible officers with consistently very good performance in a B/D would exceed the award quotas, and the departmental management is required to assess the candidates carefully and select the most suitable candidates to receive the awards³.

² The rate of the travel amount is set with reference to the arrangement of the Long and Meritorious Service Travel Award Scheme, and is granted on a one-off basis and in the form of an accountable travel allowance. A travelling companion can receive the same travel amount.

³ Awardees of the scheme have to use the travel award to make a trip outside Hong Kong for visit purpose within a validity period (i.e. within the financial year of receiving the award or before the pre-retirement leave ends (whichever is the earlier)).

(d) Civil Service Outstanding Service Award Scheme

11. The Civil Service Outstanding Service Award Scheme aims to recognise departments for providing exemplary services, encourage team spirit and innovation, and promote a people-oriented and “One Government” service culture. The scheme presents awards in two categories, namely the inter-departmental “One Government” Excellence Award and the Departmental Excellence Award. Departmental award comprises general service, specialised service, internal service, crisis response and resilience, as well as the innovation and technology presented again in collaboration with the Innovation, Technology and Industry Bureau. The last round of the scheme was held in 2022. We will organise the scheme again this year and the nomination period has commenced early this year, with a total of 120 projects nominated by 56 B/Ds.

12. The scheme adopts a rigorous two-stage adjudication process. The stage-one adjudication panels, comprising seasoned practitioners from various industries, shortlist the projects under each award for final adjudication. Final adjudication panels comprise Legislative Councillors, representatives from professional bodies, staff side of the Central Consultative Councils, and directorate officers from bureaux. They will interview the shortlisted teams and select the winners of the Gold, Silver, Bronze and Meritorious prizes.

13. The award presentation ceremony is tentatively scheduled for the third quarter of this year to commend the winning departments. We will produce short videos on civil servants’ dedicated efforts and accomplishments in serving the public for publicity and promotion. These videos will be publicised on social media and thematic website, and broadcast at government/public venues. Moreover, award-winning stories and cases will be adapted into internal training materials, and winning teams will be invited to share their experiences and insights in seminars, so that other civil servants can learn from them.

(e) HKSAR Honours and Awards System

14. Civil servants who have made significant contributions at work can be awarded under the honours and awards system of the HKSAR. Many officers have, over the years, received Bauhinia Awards, Bravery Awards, Disciplined Services and ICAC Awards, Medals of Honour and Chief Executive’s Commendations. In 2025, a total of 175 civil servants were awarded under this system. Among them, 94 received different kinds of medals and 81 received the Chief Executive’s Commendation for Government/Public Service. A full list of recipients is published every year. The Chief Executive presents honours or awards to recipients at a ceremony held at the

Government House each year.

(f) Commendation Letter Scheme

15. Apart from the above schemes, Permanent Secretaries and Heads of Departments may also issue commendation letters to officers whose performance can meet the prescribed criteria under the Commendation Letter Scheme. Such criteria include whether the officers have put up outstanding service at least in the last three years consecutively; or have made significant contribution towards enhancing the efficiency or the image of their B/Ds; or have performed a meritorious or brave act warranting special recognition. Nominations may be made all year round and they are considered by a commendation committee set up by individual B/Ds under the chairmanship of a directorate officer. Same as the practice of the SCS's Commendation Award Scheme, the commendation letter issued will be recorded in the personal file of the recipients. In 2025, a total of about 6 000 commendation letters were issued by B/Ds.

Publicity Efforts

16. If civil servants are recognised and commended for their outstanding performance, it will not only help sustain their passion for serving the community, but also promote mutual learning and attract aspirational and capable individuals to join the civil service. We will continue to step up our efforts to publicise good stories of civil servants through diversified channels. Following the extensive publicity on the good stories of the two award-winning teams of the Chief Executive's Award for Exemplary Performance from July to October 2025, we further selected 10 exemplary stories from among the award recipients of the SCS's Commendation Award Scheme 2025 and jointly produced a television series entitled "United to serve the community - Good stories of civil servants" with RTHK. The television series premiered during the prime time on RTHK TV 31 for 10 consecutive evenings from late March to early April 2026 and have been arranged for repeated broadcast in the second quarter of 2026. To further enhance the publicity impact, the videos and highlight clips were broadcast during the same period on the display screens at the platforms of over 40 MTR stations (including a number of stations with high passenger traffic), in-train TVs, over 500 government venues, and government social media platforms (including CSB's Facebook, Instagram and Weibo) as well as YouTube channels of *news.gov.hk* and *Youth.gov.hk*. We also made use of suitable physical events to broadcast the videos, such as at CSB's booth at the Education and Careers Expo held by the Hong Kong Trade Development Council, thereby expanding publicity coverage. In

addition, we arranged for awardees to attend interviews with newspapers and electronic media to showcase to the public their work attitudes, values, achievements and dedication to serving the community.

Other Measures to Motivate and Support Civil Servants

17. We will continue to make full use of the commendation schemes to give recognition to good performance. Moreover, we will also support colleagues in need by providing training on emotional wellness for civil servants. CSB has commissioned a non-governmental organisation to provide hotline counselling service on stress management to help staff from over 60 B/Ds cope with stress arising from work and other personal problems. The service includes telephone and face-to-face counselling and referral services. Separately, about 10 departments provide dedicated counselling services for their own staff. In addition, CSB and the service agency regularly organise stress management workshops for various B/Ds. Emotional management elements for handling crisis have been incorporated into some workshops to help staff regulate their emotions and enhance their abilities and skills in managing stress.

18. Furthermore, SCS will visit departments every year to keep abreast of their latest achievements and the new challenges faced by them, and to exchange views with and give encouragement to frontline staff. We also encourage departmental management to maintain close communication with staff, particularly frontline staff, with a view to promoting mutual understanding and partnership between the two sides and better fostering a sense of belonging among staff.

Awards and Commendations from Outside Organisations

19. Apart from the Government's commendations schemes, government departments receive awards and commendations from outside organisations from time to time. For instance, six government departments respectively received the Award for Public Organisation (Gold, Silver and Bronze Awards), the Award on Mediation, the Information Technology Application and Creativity Award, as well as the Customer Services Award of the Ombudsman's Awards presented in November 2025, while nine teams from 12 government departments were given team awards and 49 government employees from 25 departments were honoured with individual awards. Various government departments also received international awards. For example, the Development Bureau and its departments (viz. the Buildings

Department, the Civil Engineering and Development Department, the Drainage Services Department, the Electrical and Mechanical Services Department, the Water Supplies Department), and the Highways Department received 36 awards at the 51st International Exhibition of Inventions of Geneva in March 2026. These awards included the Saudi Innovation Excellence Prize - Ministry of Education, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and seven Gold medals with the congratulations of jury. Additionally, the Development Bureau and works departments also won nine awards at the Martin Barnes Awards presented by the New Engineering Contract Users' Group in the UK in June 2025, including two highly prestigious awards, i.e. the Climate Change Initiatives Award received by the Water Supplies Department for implementation of Shek Wu Hui Water Reclamation Plant and the Distinguished Contribution Award received by the Development Bureau. These awards have fully demonstrated the recognition of their work. These honours and commendations play an important role in encouraging the awarded teams and colleagues. Moreover, CSB will publicise these good stories across all sectors of society and the civil service through CSB's social media and the Civil Service Newsletter.

Conclusion

20. The current-term Government is committed to instilling in the civil service a culture that emphasises proactiveness, commitment, dedication and loyalty. We have been strengthening the reward and punishment system in civil service management. In respect of "reward" through implementation of the various commendation schemes mentioned above, we will continue to recognise and commend civil servants with outstanding performance who can serve as role models, so as to motivate civil servants to strive for excellence. We will also make use of different media and platforms to disseminate the good stories of civil servants. In respect of "punishment", we have in recent years streamlined the process of handling staff with persistent sub-standard performance, and stepped up efforts to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the disciplinary mechanism. In the most recent year, we have also made subsidiary legislation and operational guidelines for the Heads of Department Accountability System and the related Two-tier Investigation Mechanism on Administrative Responsibilities established by the Chief Executive. We are also about to finalise the measures to enhance the performance appraisal system for civil servants to more effectively differentiate civil servants with outstanding and sub-standard performance. We aim to achieve a balance between rewards and punishments, with clear distinctions between them.

Advice Sought

21. Members are invited to note the information in this paper on various civil service commendation schemes and their implementation, and offer comments.

Civil Service Bureau
May 2026