

Polling dates of 2019 Rural Ordinary Election gazetted

The 2019 Rural Ordinary Election will be held in January next year. The respective polling dates for each Village and Market Town (Cheung Chau and Peng Chau) were published in the Gazette today (October 19).

The Village Representative (including Indigenous Inhabitant Representative and Resident Representative) Election will be conducted on two consecutive Sundays on January 6 and 13, 2019, while the Kaifong Representative Election for Market Towns will be held on January 20, 2019 (Sunday).

The nomination period will be from November 9 to 22, 2018.

A polling notice, specifying the polling date, the address of the polling station and polling hours will be issued to each eligible elector at least 10 days before the polling day for the respective Village/Market Town.

A government spokesman appealed to all eligible persons to participate in the election.

The Rural Ordinary Election is arranged as stipulated in the Rural Representative Election Ordinance. At present, there are 709 villages with a total of 1 484 Village Representative seats, including 695 Resident Representative seats and 789 Indigenous Inhabitant Representative seats. In addition, there are 39 and 17 Kaifong Representative seats for the Market Towns of Cheung Chau and Peng Chau respectively.

For enquiries, please call 2152 1521 or contact the respective New Territories District Office. The public can also visit the Rural Representative Election website (www.had.gov.hk/rre) for more information.

Veteran Cantonese opera stars to perform award-winning work “Lu Buwei – A Kingly Potential Asset”

The acclaimed Cantonese opera stars of the Sun Moon Star Cantonese Opera will perform a newly written work entitled "Lu Buwei – A Kingly Potential Asset" in December. The play, written by Norman Cheung, won the Cantonese Opera Development Fund's Outstanding Script Award of the New Cantonese Opera

Play Scriptwriting Competition in 2016.

The play is inspired by the story of Lu Buwei, a merchant who succeeded in usurping the Ying regime of Qin, as chronicled in "Annals of the Dukedoms of Eastern Zhou Period". Playwright Norman Cheung formally became a disciple of renowned composer of Cantonese operatic songs Yeung Sek-kui to learn the art. Cheung ventured to write full-length plays for Cantonese opera and, when he heard of the New Cantonese Opera Play Scriptwriting Competition organised by the Cantonese Opera Development Fund, he was thrilled to have the opportunity to try. Cheung picked the Lu Buwei story for adaptation into a Cantonese Opera script, and was encouraged when opera performer Ng Chin-fung consented to be his supervisor and guided him on the libretto and script.

The story of "Lu Buwei – A Kingly Potential Asset" takes place towards the end of the Warring States period. Yiren, a minor prince of Qin, is held hostage in the Zhao state. Lu Buwei, a merchant, sees him as a rare commodity. He seeks Yiren out, befriends him and offers him his own concubine, Zhao Ji, who is already pregnant at the time. The baby will later be the First Emperor of Qin, Ying Zheng. Lu sells all his assets and moves the whole family to the state of Qin. With his ingenious schemes, he succeeds in paving the way for Yiren's return to his native country. After a few years, Yiren is declared heir to the throne, to which he ascends later. But he is poisoned to death by Lu, who wants to put Ying Zheng in his place.

The performers in "Lu Buwei – A Kingly Potential Asset" include Ng Chin-fung, Yuen Siu-fai, Wan Fai-yin, Song Hongbo, Leung Sum-ye, Lui Hung-kwong, Yat Dim-hung (December 12 only) and Wan Yuk-yu (December 13 only).

"Lu Buwei – A Kingly Potential Asset" is presented by the Leisure and Cultural Services Department. It will be staged at 7.30pm on December 12 and 13 (Wednesday and Thursday) at the Auditorium of the Kwai Tsing Theatre (lyrics and dialogue with Chinese and English surtitles). Tickets priced at \$120, \$220, \$300 and \$380 are now available at URB TIX (www.urbtix.hk). For telephone credit card bookings, please call 2111 5999. For programme enquiries and concessionary schemes, please call 2268 7325 or visit www.lcsd.gov.hk/CE/CulturalService/Programme/en/chinese_opera/programs_671.html.

A pre-performance talk (in Cantonese) will be held at 7.30pm on November 30 (Friday) at AC2, 4/F, Administration Building, Hong Kong Cultural Centre. Speakers will include Ng Chin-fung and Norman Cheung. A post-performance talk (in Cantonese) will be held at 7.30pm on December 15 (Saturday) at AC1, 4/F, Administration Building, Hong Kong Cultural Centre, with speakers including Ng Chin-fung, Wan Fai-yin and Norman Cheung. Admission is free with limited seats available on a first-come, first-served basis.

Financial Institutions (Resolution) (Loss-absorbing Capacity Requirements – Banking Sector) Rules and Inland Revenue (Amendment) (No. 6) Bill 2018 gazetted

The Government published in the Gazette today (October 19) the Financial Institutions (Resolution) (Loss-absorbing Capacity Requirements – Banking Sector) Rules (the Rules) and the Inland Revenue (Amendment) (No. 6) Bill 2018.

Following the commencement of the Financial Institutions (Resolution) Ordinance (Cap. 628) (the Ordinance) in July 2017, the Monetary Authority (MA), as the resolution authority for authorised institutions (AIs), has made the Rules pursuant to section 19(1) of the Ordinance to prescribe minimum loss-absorbing capacity (LAC) requirements for AIs and their group companies. The Rules are closely aligned to international standards on LAC requirements, as set out in the Financial Stability Board's Total Loss-absorbing Capacity Term Sheet.

"As banks provide important financial services to businesses and the general public, who depend on continuous access to those services, letting them become insolvent may not be an option in reality. The Rules will require banks to maintain sufficient financial resources so that they can be restored to viability by imposing losses on shareholders and creditors (instead of the public purse) should they run into difficulties. Making banks safer protects public funds and depositors, and disincentivises excessive risk-taking. Improved financial stability also facilitates economic growth from which everyone benefits," a Government spokesman said.

Owing to the loss-absorbing nature of the LAC debt instruments, their profits tax treatment under the Inland Revenue Ordinance (Cap. 112) is uncertain, in particular whether they are eligible for debt-like tax treatment. To facilitate the implementation of the Rules, the Amendment Bill will provide certainty of tax treatment for LAC debt instruments issued by AIs and relevant group companies.

The Hong Kong Monetary Authority conducted a public consultation at the beginning of 2018 on the approach to implementing LAC requirements in Hong Kong, and an industry consultation subsequently on the draft text of the Rules and the Amendment Bill. Respondents were broadly supportive of the proposals and their views have been suitably reflected in the Rules and the Amendment Bill.

The Rules and the Amendment Bill will be tabled before the Legislative

Council at its sitting on October 24 and October 31, 2018 respectively. The Rules will come into operation on December 14, 2018, upon negative vetting by the Legislative Council.

Music Office's School Care Subsidy Scheme opens for applications from schools

The 2019 School Care Subsidy Scheme is now accepting applications from schools. The deadline for applications is November 15.

Organised by the Music Office of the Leisure and Cultural Services Department, the scheme aims to encourage music groups from local kindergartens, primary, secondary and special schools and tertiary institutions to care for the community. It is hoped that students will extend their care and good wishes to the beneficiaries of local social welfare organisations through music performances, and thereby enhance social integration and harmony. In addition, students can gain performing experience and serve the community, as well as benefit by building up team spirit and organisational skills through the activities.

Each activity can receive a maximum subsidy of \$2,000 to cover costs including transportation, allowances for professionals and other miscellaneous items for each performance.

Successful applicants must complete their performances between January and May next year. Outstanding teams will be invited to perform and share their experiences at the Gala Concert, to be held on July 13. All participating schools will be awarded certificates of commendation at a presentation ceremony during the Gala Concert.

Applications will be evaluated according to the proposed activity's feasibility, ingenuity and interactive elements, as well as the music group's prior experience in organising and performing at events for the community. Application forms are now available at all music centres of the Music Office or downloadable from the website:

www.lcsd.gov.hk/en/mo/activities/communityprogrammes/2019schoolcaresubsidyscheme.html. Completed forms must be faxed to the Music Office at 2824 1989.

Over 300 school music groups have participated in the School Care Subsidy Scheme since its launch in 2009. The scheme is sponsored by the Sino Group.

For enquiries, please call 2596 0898 or 2582 5264.

Amendments to merchant seafarer law to take effect in December

The Government proposes to commence the relevant provisions in the Merchant Shipping (Seafarers) Ordinance (Cap 478) and its subsidiary legislation on December 20, 2018, to implement the requirements under the 2006 Maritime Labour Convention (MLC), which will be officially extended to Hong Kong on the same day.

Promulgated by the International Labour Organization (ILO), the MLC sets out a comprehensive set of global standards for the working and living conditions of seafarers and seeks to protect the welfare of seafarers. To prepare for the extension of the MLC to Hong Kong, various amendments to the Ordinance and its subsidiary legislations were enacted previously to incorporate the requirements of the MLC into the local legislation. With the ILO having announced that the MLC will come into force in Hong Kong on December 20, the relevant provisions in the local legislation to implement the MLC requirements have to be brought into operation.

"Implementation of the MLC's requirements, which are already in force globally, not only helps ensure that the working and living conditions of seafarers on board Hong Kong ships are up to standard, but also helps assure overseas port state control that our fleet fully complies with the relevant international conventions," a spokesperson for the Transport and Housing Bureau said.

The trade has already been notified of the date of extension of the MLC to Hong Kong and the commencement of the relevant local legislation. All relevant ships should have already complied with the requirements of the MLC.

The legislative proposal was gazetted today (October 19) and will be tabled at the Legislative Council for negative vetting on October 24.