

ADLP throws down its campaign glove

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The Association for Democracy and People's Livelihood (ADPL) yesterday officially unveiled its eight-candidate campaign for the municipal council elections.

The candidates, five in the Urban Council and three in the Regional Council, have added weight to the pro-democracy camp in the fray against the pro-China force.

About 50 aspirants from different pro-democracy factions will contest the 59 seats up for grabs in the two councils on March 5.

The Democratic Party will again be the largest competitor, fielding about 30 candidates. They will comprise prominent legislators, incumbent council members and other newly elected district board members.

The Hong Kong Democratic Foundation, a low-profile pro-democracy faction, will put up two or three candidates. The party members, Chan Man-yu and Chan Tak-wai, are expected to stand in the polls. The pro-Taiwan 123 Democratic Alliance is to field three or four hopefuls.

The ADPL chairman, Frederick Fung, expressed confidence that the party's eight candidates will have a 90 per cent success rate in the contest. Fung, a long-serving incumbent urban councillor, has dropped his plan to seek re-election.

Two fellow members, Wong Chung-ki and Tam Kwok-kiu, will stand in Fung's Sham Shui Po district, which will be split into two constituencies.

The pro-democracy camp is expected to be strengthened by candidates from other regional or political organisations. The democratic candidates, however, are expected to be confronted by strong opponents with Beijing affiliations.

The Democratic Alliance for the Betterment of Hong Kong (DAB), the leading pro-China party, is to field 14 candidates, 11 for the Urban Council and three for the Regional Council.

The party chairman, Tsang Yok-sing, said he hoped the party could have a higher success rate than in the district board elections.

The party scored a 45 per cent success rate in September's poll.

The Liberal Democratic Federation, a low-key pro-China political group, is to field six or seven candidates.

The Liberal Party, a pro-business party with good relations with China, will put up about 10 candidates.

The leftwing Federation of Trade Unions will be campaigning for candidates who are its members, some of whom are DAB members as well.

Smaller political groups, including the Hong Kong Progressive Alliance and the New Hong Kong Alliance, will also put up a few candidates.

But a "civil war" emerging in the pro-democracy camp may undermine its strength in fending off the challenge from the pro-China force.

The leading Democratic Party and Civic Force - a liberal group with a 100 per cent success rate in September - are likely to clash in Sha Tin.