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13 groups join drive for voters

Thirteen pressure groups have joined the Government in urging people to register as district board voters in a campaign starting today.

The groups said in a position paper issued yesterday that district elections were essential. They would give people a chance to gain political experience and prepare them for the democratisation of central administration.

They said registering as a voter was the first step towards democracy.

The 13 groups are the Society for Social Research, Hongkong People's Council on Public Housing Policy, the Office of Mr Lee Chik-yuet, the Office of Mr Lam Chak-piu, Education Action Group, the Office of Mr Fung Kin-kee, New Hongkong Society, Hongkong Christian Council, Meeting Point, the Joint Student Committee Concerning the Development of Hongkong Political System, Association for the Promotion of Feminism, Shamshuipo Residents' Livelihood Concern Group, and the Joint Committee on Tuen Mun People's Livelihood.

The groups blamed the low voter turnout in previous elections on the lack of powers conferred on district board members and that there was no way to ensure elected members were accountable to the voters.

They said because district board members had only consultative powers in influencing policies in the territory and constituencies, people did not bother to vote.

The 13 groups called on the Government to give elected members more executive powers — at least at district level.