

2021 Legislative Council General Election – arrangement for electors to return from Mainland to Hong Kong to vote

The Government announced today (November 29) details of the arrangement (the Arrangement) for electors to return from the Mainland to Hong Kong to vote in the 2021 Legislative Council General Election (2021 LCGE).

The 2021 LCGE will be held on December 19 this year (polling day). This is the second important election after the electoral system has been improved to fully implement the principle of "patriots administering Hong Kong", as well as the election of the largest scale. The successful conduction of the election carries significant meaning to the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) as well as the Hong Kong community. As such, the HKSAR Government attaches great importance to the various arrangements of the election and is committed to ensuring that the election will be conducted in a fair, just and honest manner while being safe, efficient and providing greater convenience for the public.

Nevertheless, since the outbreak of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, cross-boundary travel between the Mainland and Hong Kong has yet to be fully resumed while there is a large number of Hong Kong residents who are still in the Mainland. In response to this situation, the HKSAR Government has decided to set up polling stations on the Hong Kong side of Hong Kong/Shenzhen boundary control points (BCP polling stations) to enable electors who are now in the Mainland to return to Hong Kong to vote. This Arrangement complies with the relevant legal requirements and enables electors to exercise their voting rights.

The Arrangement

To this end, the HKSAR Government has requested the relevant Mainland authorities to provide necessary assistance and support. The Mainland immigration control authorities have agreed to temporarily open the boundary control points corresponding to the Heung Yuen Wai, Lo Wu and Lok Ma Chau Spur Line boundary control points, viz. Liantang, Luohu and Futian checkpoints. The Mainland authorities for public health protection management have agreed that, under the condition that the specified health protection requirements are met, electors who have successfully registered for the Arrangement may be exempted from the centralised quarantine or medical surveillance requirement of the Mainland if they return to the Mainland immediately after casting their votes at BCP polling stations. The HKSAR Government is very grateful to the relevant Mainland authorities for making the corresponding support measures.

In order not to increase the risk of spreading disease, the polling

stations will adopt closed-loop management. After polling hours, the polling stations will be turned into counting stations. Except for electors who have been assigned to the BCP polling stations, candidates or their agents and electoral staff, entry to or exit from the BCP polling stations will be prohibited and public observation of the counting process will not be arranged. As candidates or their agents can apply to enter the polling stations to observe the counting process, the Government considers that the fairness and openness of the election have been sufficiently safeguarded.

Eligibility to register

To ensure that the Arrangement would be carried out in an orderly manner, and to minimise the risk of spreading the disease, all electors who join the Arrangement must make a prior registration. The Arrangement is open for registration by all registered electors of the geographical and functional constituencies of the 2021 LCGE. If a registrant would like to confirm his/her status as an elector, he/she may log in to the Online Voter Information Enquiry System (www.voterinfo.gov.hk) to ascertain whether he/she is a registered elector.

The Arrangement is only applicable to electors of geographical and functional constituencies and is not applicable to the electors of the Election Committee constituency (ECC). For the ECC, the Electoral Affairs Commission has arranged for the polling to be conducted centrally at the dedicated polling station at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre to ensure that the polling and counting processes could be conducted smoothly. As such, under the Arrangement, polling by the ECC would not be arranged at the BCP polling stations. If an elector of the ECC is now in the Mainland, they should plan their trip to return to Hong Kong in advance or return to Hong Kong via the Return2hk Scheme with a view to casting their votes on the polling day.

Quota

To ensure that the Arrangement is implemented in an orderly manner, a prior registration system would be adopted and a quota would also be imposed. The maximum registration quota for the three BCP polling stations would be 111 000 (the respective quota are: Heung Yuen Wai (Liantang): 33 000; Lo Wu (Luohu): 42 000; and Lok Ma Chau Spur Line (Futian): 36 000). The quota will be distributed on a first-come, first-served basis.

Registration

(a) Online Registration

The Registration and Electoral Office (REO) will set up a dedicated online registration system (www.reo-form.gov.hk/preregistration.htm) for the Arrangement. The system will commence operation starting from 9am on December 1, 2021. Electors who wish to participate in the Arrangement could make a prior registration through the relevant online registration system.

The registration hours will be from 9am, December 1, 2021, to 6pm,

December 8, 2021. Electors who want to register must choose the BCP polling station (i.e. choose one from Heung Yuen Wai, Lo Wu or Lok Ma Chau Spur Line) that he/she would like to vote. Once confirmed, the elector must cast the vote(s) at the chosen BCP polling station. If electors arrive at any other non-chosen BCP polling stations, they will not be allowed to vote. When registering through the online registration system, electors will also need to choose to vote at a specified timeslot (each hour will be counted as one slot) on the polling day so as to facilitate the corresponding arrangement and crowd management by the relevant departments.

(b) Information required for registration

When registering, electors would need to provide a Chinese/English name, Hong Kong identity card (HKID) number, email address, contact telephone number (including telephone number in the HKSAR or the Mainland which can receive SMS), Hong Kong and Macao Residents Entry and Exit Permit (Home Return Permit) number and the ordinarily residing area in the Mainland (province/municipality/autonomous region). If an elector does not have a Home Return Permit, he/she may provide the number of a foreign passport or travel document used to enter the Mainland (though the elector would need to ascertain the visa arrangement for re-entering the Mainland). Relevant information will be passed to the relevant departments in Hong Kong and the Mainland for the purposes of public health protection and immigration control.

(c) Confirmation of registration

After submitting the application for registration, electors will be assigned a reference number. The REO will issue a notification of registration result to the elector via SMS and/or email within three days to confirm whether they have successfully registered to vote at the specified BCP polling station. An elector could only vote at the BCP polling station under the Arrangement if he/she has received a notification of registration confirming the successful registration.

Arrangement after registration

After receiving the confirmation that the registration is successful, electors should take a COVID-19 nucleic acid test in one of the medical testing institutions recognised by the National Health Commission 48 hours before entering Hong Kong on the polling day (see the list at: bmfw.www.gov.cn/hsjcjgcx/index.html). Electors will be asked to present the proof (either written or electronic are acceptable) of a valid negative nucleic acid test result when departing the Mainland and entering Hong Kong. In addition, electors would also need to present a Mainland "Green Health Code". Persons from medium or high risk areas in the Mainland, persons who have stayed or visited districts or cities (municipality as districts) of the high risk areas in the past 14 days, persons who have been confirmed with COVID-19 in the past three months are not allowed to vote at the BCP polling stations. In addition, persons who have stayed or visited districts or cities (municipality as districts) of the medium risk areas in the past 14 days would be required to use a separate channel as instructed onsite. For the

risk levels of various places in the Mainland, please refer to the risk level enquiry webpage maintained by the National Health Commission:
bmfw.www.gov.cn/myqfxdjcx/allsearch.html.

Documents to bring on the polling day

On the polling day, when departing the Mainland and entering Hong Kong, electors who have registered for the Arrangement would need to bring and present the following documents:

- (a) the Home Return Permit or other travel document used by the elector to enter and leave the Mainland;
- (b) the "notification of registration result" issued by the REO via SMS or email (both electronic or printed version are acceptable);
- (c) a valid negative nucleic acid test result issued within 48 hours by the aforementioned recognised institutions;
- (d) Mainland "Green Health Code"; and
- (e) HKID or other recognised proof of identity (see Annex).

Issues to note on the polling day

Under the Arrangement, electors who have successfully registered must immediately return to the Mainland after casting their votes at the specified BCP polling station on the polling day. Otherwise, the arrangement for exempting the quarantine requirement of Hong Kong and the Mainland will not be applicable. When entering and leaving the BCP polling stations, electors must wear face masks, use the hand sanitisers provided to clean their hands and maintain social distancing of one metre. Before electors enter the BCP polling station, staff from the Department of Health will check their body temperature.

The Government spokesman reiterated that "The 2021 LCGE will elect 90 members of the Legislative Council (LegCo) to form the new term of the LegCo. The Government will ensure that the election is held in a fair, just, clean, safe and orderly manner. Under the new electoral system, we believe that the executive authorities and the legislature would interact rationally to monitor and co-operate with each other such that the efficiency of the governance of the Government could be effectively enhanced. We strongly urge registered electors to vote and participate in this important election, which is particularly meaningful to Hong Kong, to elect the new term of LegCo Members with a view to building a brighter future for Hong Kong".

For details of the Arrangement, please visit the dedicated website (www.elections.gov.hk). For enquiries, please email to reoeng@reo.gov.hk or call the REO hotline (2891 1001). The hotline will operate from 8.45am to 8pm on Monday to Friday.