

EAC Chairman chairs first meeting of Crisis Management Committee

The following is issued on behalf of the Electoral Affairs Commission:

The Chairman of the Electoral Affairs Commission (EAC), Mr Justice Barnabas Fung Wah, chaired the first meeting of the Crisis Management Committee (CMC) this afternoon (December 15) to prepare for the 2021 Legislative Council General Election (LCGE) to be held on December 19 (Sunday).

"The LCGE is the largest public election after the Improving Electoral System (Consolidated Amendments) Ordinance 2021 came into effect. About 630 polling stations will be set up on the polling day, while about 39 000 colleagues from different government departments will be working in different positions. When it comes to public elections, openness, fairness and honesty are the most basic principles. The EAC will strive to follow these principles and make practical arrangements in accordance with the law," Mr Justice Fung said at today's meeting.

He said, "The electoral arrangements introduced by the Ordinance, including using an Electronic Poll Register system to issue ballot papers, and the special queuing arrangements (for persons who are aged 70 or above, persons who have difficulties in standing for a long time to queue due to their physical condition and pregnant women) to collect ballot papers, were implemented in the Election Committee Subsector Ordinary Elections held in September. However, there are more than 4.47 million registered electors in the LCGE. This is the first time that these arrangements are implemented at such a large scale, which is indeed a very big test.

"In addition, the Registration and Electoral Office (REO) will implement various measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in polling and counting stations. Thus, all electoral staff and electors have to adapt to the above new arrangements. This also poses additional challenges to the preparatory work for the election."

Moreover, three temporary polling stations will be set up at Heung Yuen Wai, Lo Wu and Lok Ma Chau Spur Line boundary control points respectively for the first time to facilitate the Hong Kong registered electors of geographical constituencies and functional constituencies in the Mainland to return to Hong Kong to vote and be exempted from the quarantine requirements after fulfilling certain criteria. The EAC thanks the Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau (CMAB) for its coordination and arrangements.

"To ensure the orderly implementation of various measures, as well as the smooth voting and counting processes on the polling day, the EAC is working with different bureaux and departments in drawing up security and crisis management plans to deal with different circumstances which may arise during the election."

During the meeting, the EAC was briefed by representatives from the CMAB and relevant government departments, including the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer and the Hong Kong Police Force, on the assessment of different situations and deployment planned for the polling day. The REO, the Home Affairs Bureau, the Home Affairs Department, the Information Services Department, the Department of Justice, the Department of Health, the Food and Health Bureau and the Electrical and Mechanical Services Department also gave briefings on preparatory and co-ordination work regarding the election.

Mr Justice Fung pointed out that the CMC will assist the EAC in closely monitoring the situation on the polling day and will handle situations in which the election is affected by different incidents.

The EAC said that the meeting today helped it to get better prepared and formulate contingency plans for the LCGE to be held on December 19, and thanked all the bureaux and departments for their efforts in the preparations and arrangements for the election.

The CMC is part of the contingency mechanism for public elections. The CMC advises the EAC on matters which may affect the proceedings of the elections, such as inclement weather and issues of public health and safety. The Committee is chaired by the EAC Chairman, and comprises all EAC members, the Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs (or his representative) and representatives of relevant bureaux/departments.