

Opening remarks by SCMA at media session on Register of Electors case

Following is the English translation of the opening remarks made by the Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs, Mr Patrick Nip, at a media session today (April 9) at the Central Government Offices on the latest situation of the search by the Registration and Electoral Office (REO) for a Register of Electors relating to the 2016 Legislative Council (LegCo) General Election:

It had come to the attention of the Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau (CMAB) last week that a Register of Electors relating to the 2016 LegCo General Election could not be located. I considered that the matter was very serious and immediately demanded the REO to conduct a thorough search to ascertain if the Register had been lost. The REO has done detailed and comprehensive searches of a number of storage areas for electoral materials over the past few days and it was confirmed this morning that the Register cannot be found.

The REO has reported the case to the Police and formally notified the Office of the Privacy Commissioner for Personal Data (PCPD) this morning. I have also instructed the REO to: (a) inform affected electors as soon as possible; (b) send letters to government departments and organisations which have frequent handling of personal data in their daily work to alert them to the incident; and (c) review the voter registration information of the some 8,000 electors on the Register to see if there have been unusual changes since 2016. If any abnormality is found, the REO will contact the relevant electors to verify and follow up.

I feel regret about the incident and once again extend my apology to the affected members of the public. I understand that the way REO handles the matter is disappointing. Public elections in Hong Kong have all along been held in an open, fair and honest way. There is no question of compromising people's confidence because of any wrongdoing.

I have requested the REO to follow up on the matter in a serious manner, including: (a) fully co-operating with the Police and the PCPD in their investigations; and (b) submitting a comprehensive report on the incident to the CMAB and the Electoral Affairs Commission (EAC). If it is found that human errors or deliberate cover-up are involved, we will definitely handle the matter in accordance with the established disciplinary mechanism.

The EAC has decided to conduct a thorough review of the incident to find out if there are any problems or loopholes relating to the electoral arrangements as well as overall management of the REO with a view to mapping out improvement measures. The CMAB will provide independent administrative support to the EAC in conducting the review. It is expected that the EAC will complete the report eight weeks after commencement of work.