

SCMA chairs inter-departmental meeting to prepare for District Council Ordinary Election (with photo)

The Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs, Mr Patrick Nip, today (November 15) chaired an inter-departmental working meeting to actively prepare for the 2019 District Council Ordinary Election to be held on November 24.

Mr Nip said that the election was an important platform for 4.13 million registered electors to exercise their right to vote and elect their representatives. The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government and the Electoral Affairs Commission would spare no effort in making the necessary arrangements in strict accordance with the Basic Law and relevant local legislation, to ensure that the election could be held in a safe and orderly manner.

Recent social unrests and persisted serious violent incidents have presented an unprecedented challenge to the preparatory work for the election. Mr Nip said, "To ensure that the election can be held safely, the HKSAR Government has held a number of inter-departmental working meetings to draw up various security and crisis management plans to deal with unforeseeable circumstances which may arise during the election."

At today's meeting, Mr Nip, joined by representatives from the Security Bureau and other departments including the Hong Kong Police Force, Fire Services Department, Civil Aid Service and so on, conducted risk assessment of the present situation and drew up various contingency plans for the election day. In order to protect the safety of the candidates, electors and polling staff, the security of the polling stations will be enhanced, and intelligence gathering by relevant departments will be stepped up to enable quick response to possible safety risks.

Mr Nip said, "The Crisis Management Committee will closely monitor the process of the election, and handle situations in which the election may be affected by the occurrence of riots, open violence or danger to public health or safety."

Mr Nip was also briefed by the Registration and Electoral Office (REO) on the detailed arrangements of the election, including the arrangement for polling stations and alternative polling stations, recruitment and training of electoral staff, printing of ballot papers and the arrangement for mock polling.

Mr Nip was pleased to learn the good progress of various preparatory work by the REO. Over 600 ordinary polling stations and 20 dedicated polling stations have been put in place. Also, the REO has arranged training and briefing sessions for about 20 000 electoral staff that covered polling and

counting procedures, handling of personal data, crisis management, quality polling service and complaint handling. The REO also ensured that the quantity of ballot papers were sufficient to cater for full turnout and for the replacement of inadvertently marked ballot papers. Also, the REO would open four mock polling stations on Hong Kong Island, Kowloon and the New Territories respectively from November 20 to 23 to help electors familiarise themselves with the voting procedures.

During the meeting, Mr Nip also discussed various coordination work regarding the election with other government departments including the Transport Department, Home Affairs Department, the Independent Commission Against Corruption and the Department of Justice.

Mr Nip hoped that electors could treasure this one in a four year opportunity to vote. He also called on violent protesters to stop all violent acts immediately, and members of the public to say no to violence, so that the more than four million electors could exercise their right to vote on November 24 in a peaceful and safe environment.

