

SCMA on arrangement for electors to return from Mainland to Hong Kong to vote in 2021 Legislative Council General Election (with photo/video)

Following is the transcript of remarks made by the Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs, Mr Erick Tsang Kwok-wai, on the arrangement for electors to return from the Mainland to Hong Kong to vote in the 2021 Legislative Council General Election this afternoon (November 29) at West Wing, Central Government Offices:

Reporter: Mr Tsang, can you explain given that the election law actually states that a voter must ordinarily reside in Hong Kong. How can election officials now verify and check these cross-border voters are actually eligible to cast their ballots? That is my first question.

The second question is about the openness and transparency. You talked about you would invite the candidates and agents to go to the border voting stations to observe the vote counting, but would the Hong Kong media be allowed to enter the stations, just like they enter the convention centre in Wan Chai? Would the media be allowed to observe? What if in the event that agents and candidates don't go to the places (to observe vote counting), how can you ensure the openness? Thank you.

Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs: For the first question, about the ordinary residence, as I said before, you can't simply say that while one is for the time being not in Hong Kong, he is not regarded as ordinarily resident in Hong Kong. You have to take into account all relevant factors, such as what is the reason he is for the time being not in Hong Kong, how long he is absent from Hong Kong, whether he still has close connections in Hong Kong, and whether he is occasionally coming back to Hong Kong to do his own business or family union, etc. So you just can't say that for those voters for the time being now in the Mainland for various reasons, they cannot be regarded as ordinarily resident in Hong Kong.

Actually, the REO, the Registration and Electoral Office, they have established the mechanism to check in every voter registration cycle, whether the voters are still ordinarily resident in Hong Kong and still eligible as voters. If they find that the voters are no longer ordinarily resident in Hong Kong, of course they will take necessary action. As a matter of fact, every year we have tens of thousands voters, they are not regarded as ordinarily resident in Hong Kong and the registration are cancelled for that reason. So I will say that everything we are doing now is strictly in accordance with the law and the established arrangement and mechanism.

For the second question, the reason why we will not arrange the public to attend the counting process is simply because we try to minimise the risk

of infection. After consulting the EAC (Electoral Affairs Commission), we all think that the existing arrangement, that those candidates and their agents are being invited to attend the counting process is an appropriate arrangement, which the fairness and transparency can be guaranteed. Thank you.

(Please also refer to the Chinese portion of the transcript.)

