

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.



[Transcript of remarks of inter-departmental press conference](#)

The Chief Secretary for Administration, Mr Matthew Cheung Kin-chung, together with the Secretary for the Civil Service, Mr Joshua Law; the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Mr Frank Chan Fan; the Secretary for Education, Mr Kevin Yeung; and the Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs, Mr Patrick Nip, held an inter-departmental press conference today (November 15). Following is the transcript of remarks of the press conference:

Reporter: First question regarding the situation near CUHK. The protesters are saying that if their demands are not satisfied they will continue to block the road again. And are you concerned, because tomorrow is Saturday, it's the beginning of the weekend, are you concerned that the road blockage situation will continue into the weekend and even into next week? And will

classes have to continue to be suspended on Monday? Second question to CS: So what do you mean by that the Government will be using more determined measures to tackle the violent protests? What do you mean by that? Third question is regarding civil servants. Because the situation in Hong Kong nowadays is that it's so easy for you to get arrested just for passing by a protest site or just for being a curious onlooker, and a civil servant was arrested just for, well, taking MTR at Prince Edward Station on August 31. So when so many people are accusing the Police of abusing their power of making arrest, is suspension really an appropriate measure to tackle civil servants who might just be passing by or who are really innocent?

Chief Secretary for Administration: I think Secretary for Transport (and Housing) will answer the first question. I will do the second and then Mr Yeung the third one. Okay?

Secretary for Transport and Housing: Since June this year, we have witnessed extensive damage to the public transport system and road transport as well as railway transport. In any country or economy, if there was similar scale of destruction, I would assure you none of these public transport could survive. As we have witnessed during the past few months, government departments such as the Transport Department, the Highways Department and other disciplinary services as well as public transport operators have been working extremely hard with dedication and determination to maintain public transport services for Hong Kong people. It is not a magic. I must say it's "Hong Kong can do spirit" that prevails. I would appeal to those who have chosen to destruct the public transport system to think again and again and again the purpose of the destruction and why they have chosen to destruct the system that serves Hong Kong people. They are not destructing hardware. They are actually destructing all the entitlement of Hong Kong people who could travel freely, efficiently and speedily every day. The question as to how and whether the scale of destruction would escalate or become more pervasive, I would suggest you ask those who chose to destruct, but not the Government, not the public transport operators.

Chief Secretary for Administration: The second question is about how determined we are. Let me stress here, very clearly, we're determined to reinforce Government's efforts internally, that is, to co-ordinate our work, our efforts and across the full spectrum of the entire administration to tackle the present crisis, the present situation. In other words, the whole problem before us at the moment is a challenge. It's not just a problem for individual departments or bureaux, it's for the entire Hong Kong community. That's why we have to act in concert, in unison, with one heart, one mind, one purpose, one mission, which is to put violence to an end as soon as practicable for the interests of Hong Kong, for the sake of every Hong Kong law-abiding citizen. I think this is incumbent on Government and also the whole community. Let's work together, join hands together to really say no to violence.

On the part of Government, as I said at the Legislative Council debate yesterday and the day before, we've already had various co-ordinated mechanisms in place, but I've now decided to really go one step forward, that is, to reinforce our efforts on that score by making sure that our responses

are well co-ordinated, making sure that they're effective and robust enough to tackle the present crisis. A good example is that we're not just helping the Police but are now ensuring that all departments, all bureaux clamping down violence, tackling violence, as the number one priority. As President Xi Jinping said yesterday, putting an end to violence and maintain law and order is the overwhelming priority of the entire Government and entire Hong Kong community. It's not just the Government alone. Hong Kong's number one priority now is to really put an end to violence and restore peace and order in Hong Kong. So we are doing it on all fronts and in a very serious fashion. For example, all disciplined services in Hong Kong are doing their very best to support the Police, not to just let the Police fight alone, they act together in unison. The Correctional Services Department, for example, a number of their officers have volunteered to take up the job of Special Constables for a temporary period under a pilot scheme to help ease the pressure on the Police. They can guard various facilities and help Police in other duties as well so that they could free up Police in front-line operation duties. It's very important.

The second thing is that, for example, when it comes to reinforcing the cleansing work and clearing of road blockages, the Food and Hygiene Services Department as well as the Highways Department plus the Transport Department at the moment are working together after every incident. From yesterday onwards, the civil aid services have also come into the scene joining effort together. Hence, it's not just by the three civilian departments but also by the civil aid services, which is another major step forward. Of course, we will ensure that every department is well-equipped, well-positioned and well-motivated to help fight the present challenges. In other words, we will try to put violence to an end as soon as practicable. I can give you more examples, but I just want to be brief and punchy here. So, I'll hand over the floor to Joshua, Secretary for the Civil Service.

Secretary for the Civil Service: Thank you CS. First of all, I cannot agree with your assumption that Police are making arrests without any grounds. The Government would not tolerate civil servants breaching the law. The very important point is that the rationale of interdiction is to protect public interests. It would be difficult for the community to accept if a civil servant having arrested for taking part in illegal activities could return to office as normal and continue to exercise the powers and functions of his office. That is the main reason and the main grounds for our policy for interdiction.

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

Rioters block Tolo Highway again

Attention duty announcers, radio and TV stations:

Please broadcast the following message as soon as possible and repeat it at suitable intervals:

At around 7.45pm, rioters blocked the entire Tolo Highway once again, seriously obstructing movement of members of the public and emergency services.

Police are now making arrangements in directing traffic to facilitate the commuters to leave the highway safely.

Police strongly condemn the rioters for paralysing transport network. Rioters blatantly disregard public concern, by blocking the major road in rush hour. Police once again appeal to Chinese University of Hong Kong to keep their promise and help us restore social stability and road safety.

The Government arranges free transportation services for Tai Po District and North District

To facilitate the commuting of people living and working in Tai Po District and North District, the Government has arranged free transportation services today (November 15). The service hours are from 5pm to 10.30pm today. Detailed route information is as follows:

- Free ferry service between Wu Kai Sha Public Pier and Tai Po Waterfront Park Pier
- Free coach service between Tai Po Waterfront Park near Dai King Street Roundabouts and Tai Po Market Station (pick-up point at Uptown Plaza) (Route A)
- Free coach service between Tai Po Market Station (behind the escalator at Uptown Plaza) and Sheung Shui Station (taxi stand at Choi Yuen Estate near the layby at Po Shek Wu Estate) (Route B)

The Government will also arrange free transportation services tomorrow (November 16). The service hours are from 7am to 7pm tomorrow. Detailed route information is as follows:

- Free ferry service between Wu Kai Sha Public Pier and Tai Po Waterfront Park Pier
- Free coach service between Tai Po Waterfront Park near Dai King Street Roundabouts and Tai Po Market Station (pick-up point at Uptown Plaza) (Route A)

Government spares no effort in preparing for District Council Ordinary Election

In response to media enquiries, a Government spokesman said today (November 15) that relevant government departments and the Electoral Affairs Commission are now moving full steam ahead and devoting their utmost effort to preparing for the 2019 District Council Ordinary Election (DCOE) to be held on November 24, with a view to making the election be held as planned in a safe and orderly manner.

"The DCOE is an important platform for more than four million registered electors to exercise their voting right and elect the District Council members who can represent them. The Government is making the greatest effort in organising a decent election and in ensuring that it be held smoothly in accordance with the law," the Government spokesman said.

However, recent violent and illegal attacks have kept escalating, and arsons, throwing petrol bombs, vandalising public transport facilities, blocking major trunk roads, breaching public peace, posing threats to life, etc, are prevalent. All these have posed tremendous challenges to the work of protecting the personal safety of candidates, electors, and electoral staff, as well as ensuring the on-time arrival of electoral staff at polling stations, and smoothly carrying out the work of voting and vote-counting.

The Government spokesman severely condemns those reckless behaviours that endanger public interests and deprive the rights of the others. "The Government sincerely calls on all members of the public, regardless of their backgrounds or political inclination, to say 'no' to violence together. We also strongly urge protesters to stop all violent acts so as to resume peace to society and enable the 4.13 million electors to cast their votes to elect their representatives safely on November 24," said the Government spokesman.