

PRESS RELEASE

SAFETY MEASURES TO ENSURE SAFE ELECTIONS DURING COVID-19 SITUATION

The Elections Department (ELD) has drawn up contingency plans for safety measures for Nomination and Polling proceedings at the next General Election (GE). These measures will protect the health and safety of voters, candidates and election officials, and ensure that the next GE can be conducted safely should it be held during the COVID-19 situation.

2 In drawing up these measures, ELD will abide by the prevailing Ministry of Health (MOH) guidelines on safe distancing and safe management so that candidates, voters and election officials are kept safe during the proceedings. Election officials will be equipped with the necessary protective gear to protect themselves as well as candidates and voters. ELD's key considerations are to:

- (a) Minimise the exposure of voters, candidates and election officials to unwell persons and those who may have come into recent close contact with COVID-19 cases;
- (b) Ensure the safety of voters, candidates and election officials; and
- (c) Safeguard the health of our senior voters, who are more vulnerable.

3 These safety measures go beyond the provisions in the Parliamentary Elections (COVID-19 Special Arrangements) Act 2020, which allows ELD to implement special, temporary arrangements to ensure the safety of voters, candidates and election officials.

Nomination Proceedings

Transacting with ELD via digital services to prepare for Nomination

4 Given the COVID-19 situation, candidates and their election agents are strongly encouraged to use ELD's expanded digital services to prepare the necessary documents required for Nomination. The system will be available for use once the Writ of Election is issued. Those who prefer to submit forms in hard copy can continue to do so, but they should download and print the forms from the ELD website instead of obtaining the forms in person at ELD.

5 Those who wish to familiarise themselves with the system can view screenshots of the services at the ELD website.

Unwell candidate can authorise a representative to file Nomination papers on his behalf

6 As provided for under the Parliamentary Elections (COVID-19 Special Arrangements) Act 2020, an aspiring candidate who is unwell and certified by a medical practitioner to be unfit to attend Nomination proceedings in person, can authorise a representative to file his Nomination papers. The authorised representative must have the power of attorney, which must include authorisation to

submit the Nomination papers and to raise objections to the Nomination papers of other candidates. Other requirements for successful nomination (e.g. required number of subscribers, Political Donation Certificate) must still be fulfilled.

7 Subscribers (i.e. seconder, proposer, assentors) who are unwell will not be allowed to enter the Nomination Centre. Candidates should replace subscribers who are unwell.

Safety measures at Nomination Centres

8 ELD will put in place the following measures to ensure the safety of all persons on Nomination Day:

- (a) Temperature screening to detect persons with fever or respiratory symptoms.
- (b) Contact tracing. All persons will have to use the SafeEntry app to check-in/out for contact tracing.
- (c) Safe distancing within the Nomination Centre. Candidates and subscribers will stand or sit at least 1m apart when interacting with election officials and other persons.
- (d) Requiring all persons to wear masks at all times.
- (e) Processing unwell candidate(s) and his team separately. Candidates found to have fever or respiratory symptoms during temperature screening will be directed to a separate area for nomination. They and their subscribers can inspect Nomination papers of other candidates at the separate area. Tables and chairs will be cleaned after every team has filed its Nomination papers.
- (f) Equipping election officials with appropriate protective gear (e.g. surgical masks, disposable gloves, face shields, pocket-sized hand sanitisers) to carry out their duties safely.
- (g) Deploying dedicated cleaners at all Nomination Centres to ensure a high level of hygiene during the nomination proceedings. After the completion of proceedings, cleaners will thoroughly disinfect the Nomination Centres before returning the premises to their original users.

Campaigning with necessary precautions

9 Guidelines for campaigning (e.g. whether physical rallies, walkabouts and house-to-house visits can continue) will take guidance from prevailing MOH guidelines on safe distancing and safe management. As these activities involve large group gatherings, the guidelines will depend on the COVID-19 situation at the time. ELD will therefore share these guidelines at a later date.

10 Should prevailing health advisories restrict large group activities, ELD will ensure that voters have access to the campaigning messages of all political parties

and candidates. This may include additional TV broadcast time for candidates and political parties.

11 In consideration of the health and safety of all individuals during the COVID-19 situation, ELD strongly encourages candidates and political parties to plan for modes of campaigning that minimise large group gatherings.

12 As at past elections, campaigning activities on the Internet can continue, in accordance with guidelines for such activities.

Polling Proceedings

Safety measures at polling stations

13 ELD will put in place the following measures to ensure the safe and smooth conduct of polling:

(a) Temperature screening

- i. Temperature screening of all voters at the start of the queue to detect persons with fever or respiratory symptoms. A decision on whether such persons will be allowed to vote will be made later based on the prevailing COVID-19 situation.
- ii. Temperatures of all candidates and polling agents will also be taken if they wish to enter the polling station. Anyone detected with fever or respiratory symptoms will be refused entry.

(b) Contact tracing

- i. Polling agents and candidates will have to use the SafeEntry app to check-in/out for contact tracing.
- ii. Voters are not required to use the SafeEntry app, as the e-Registration system records the time when voters register at the polling station and can be used for contact tracing if necessary.

(c) Safe distancing at polling stations

- i. Safe distancing will be enforced at all times for voters waiting to enter the polling stations and within the polling stations.
- ii. The seating area for election officials and polling agents will be spaced out to keep them at least 1m apart.

(d) Measures to reduce potential crowding at the polling stations

- i. More polling stations to reduce the number of voters at each polling station. There will be an increase from 880 polling stations to 1,100 polling stations, with the number of voters per polling station reduced

from an average of 3,000 to 2,400. Voters should not bring non-voters (e.g. children) to the polling stations.

- ii. Voters will be allotted a recommended 2-hour voting time-band, which will be indicated on their hardcopy poll card and e-Poll card (on the SingPass mobile app), to spread out voters across polling hours. Senior voters will be allotted recommended time-bands in the morning as an additional precautionary measure (see para 14). Voters are encouraged to cast their ballots during their allotted time-bands, although they may do so at any time when the polling stations are open.
- iii. Digital service for voters to check queue situation at their assigned polling station (<http://VoteQ.gowhere.gov.sg>) before setting off to vote, to further spread out voters and avoid bunching at the start of each 2-hour time-band.

(e) Quick and contactless voting

- i. With e-Registration, each voter should not need to spend more than 5 minutes within the polling station (including registering, sanitising their hands, putting on disposable gloves, and voting).
- ii. As voters will self-scan their NRIC for registration, no contact with election officials is required.

(f) Enforcement of stringent hygiene practices

- i. In line with the law, voters are to wear masks when they leave their homes.
- ii. Voters are to sanitise their hands and don disposable gloves before receiving a ballot paper. This will minimise the risk of contaminating the self-inking “X” pen (which will be used by other voters) or ballot papers (which will be handled by counting assistants during counting). Voters may also bring their own pens to mark the ballot papers.
- iii. Equipping election officials with appropriate protective gear (e.g. surgical masks, disposable gloves, face shields, pocket-sized hand sanitisers) to carry out their duties safely. They will also have ready access to water and soap to wash their hands regularly.
- iv. Deploying dedicated cleaners at all polling stations to ensure a high level of hygiene and cleaning frequency throughout polling hours. Cleaners will be deployed to clean common touch-points (e.g. polling booths, self-inking “X” pens) within the polling area at least once every half hour. After the close of poll, cleaners will thoroughly disinfect the polling stations.

Special arrangements to safeguard health of senior voters

14 Senior voters aged 65 years old and above will be allotted recommended 2-hour voting time-bands from 8am to 12 noon. Senior voters who require assistance may be accompanied by one household member. Those senior voters who are unable to vote during their allotted time-bands in the morning can still do so at other times of the day where they will be able to join priority queues.

15 To enable a safer environment for our seniors to vote, ELD encourages younger voters to vote during their allotted time-bands. Younger voters who turn up to vote in the morning may have to wait longer.

Minimising exposure to unwell persons and those who have come into recent close contact with COVID-19 cases

16 Voters on Stay-Home Notice (SHN) at designated facilities (e.g. hotels) will vote at special polling stations away from other voters as permitted under the Parliamentary Elections (COVID-19 Special Arrangements) Act 2020.

17 When the Writ is issued, ELD will consult MOH to assess the public health risks of allowing other affected voters (e.g. those on Quarantine Orders, serving SHNs at home, or on medical certificate for acute respiratory symptoms) to vote, and decide based on the prevailing COVID-19 situation at that time. The decision for these groups of voters will be announced then.

Educating voters, candidates and their agents on safety measures

18 We call on all voters, candidates and their agents to be socially responsible, and play their part to ensure a safe election for everyone.

19 In the lead up to Polling Day, ELD will reach out to voters through various communication channels in the four official languages to inform them of the safety measures, and reassure them that it is safe to vote in an election held during the COVID-19 situation.

ISSUED BY
ELECTIONS DEPARTMENT
PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE

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