

PRESS RELEASE

SPECIAL VOTING ARRANGEMENTS TO PROTECT HEALTH AND SAFETY AT GENERAL ELECTION 2020

1 The Elections Department (ELD) has announced the approach for voting by certain groups of voters, in view of the prevailing COVID-19 situation. These groups of voters are:

- a. COVID-19 patients;
- b. Those on Quarantine Order (QO) for COVID-19;
- c. Those under COVID-19 Stay Order, commonly known as “Stay Home Notice” (SHN) at home;
- d. Those on medical certificate (MC) for Acute Respiratory Infection (ARI); and
- e. Those detected with fever, i.e. with a body temperature of 37.5 degrees Celsius and above at temperature screening at the polling stations on Polling Day.

2 ELD has consulted the Ministry of Health (MOH) on the voting arrangements for these groups of voters to **protect the health and safety of everyone, including voters, candidates and election officials**, while still allowing those among these voters who may want to exercise their right to vote to do so.

VOTING ARRANGEMENTS FOR DIFFERENT GROUPS OF VOTERS

COVID-19 patients and persons on QO for COVID-19

3 COVID-19 patients and voters who are on QO for COVID-19 will not be allowed to vote, to minimise their contact with members of the public and reduce risk of community transmission. The number of voters in these two groups is about 350 as of 30 June 2020.

Special voting hour for persons on SHNs at home and unwell persons

4 For voters who are under SHN at home, on MC for ARI, or have fever (temperature of 37.5 degrees Celsius and above), MOH has advised that they should remain at home, and not move around in the community to avoid risk of transmission. As of 30 June 2020, there are about 360 voters under SHN at home.

5 However, ELD recognises that some of these voters may want to exercise their right to vote. In order to minimise exposure to other voters, candidates and election officials, ELD will set aside a special voting hour between 7pm and 8pm for these voters to vote. ELD has consulted the Director of Medical Services (DMS) and the DMS grants permission to those on SHN at home and those on MC for ARI to leave their homes to vote during the special voting hour, subject to the conditions at Annex A. Such voters should take precautions when travelling to their assigned polling stations, such as by not taking public transport, going directly to the polling station and returning home immediately after voting, maintaining safe distancing, as well as wearing a mask at all times. If such voters show up at the polling stations during the

regular voting hours from 8am to 7pm, **they will be turned away and asked to return between 7pm and 8pm.**

6 During the special voting hour between 7pm and 8pm, there will be a smaller team of election officials manning the polling station. These officials will exercise additional precautions (e.g. don full personal protective equipment, sanitise polling equipment and contact surfaces after every voter's use). Details on the procedures during the special voting hour is at [Annex B](#).

7 Voters who are well **should avoid the special voting hour between 7pm and 8pm and keep to their recommended voting time-band.** Should they turn up to vote during the special voting hour, they will still be allowed to vote as the law allows for voting from 8am to 8pm.

Persons on SHNs at designated facilities

8 For those on SHN at designated facilities, they will be allowed to vote at the designated facilities away from other voters, as provided for under the Parliamentary Elections (COVID-19 Special Arrangements) Act 2020. Polling and counting proceedings for those on SHN at designated facilities is at [Annex C](#).

Restoring names of voters who are unwell or on QO and SHN to the registers

9 Persons who are unable to vote because they are unwell can apply for their names to be restored to the Registers of Electors after the election without penalty. For COVID-19 patients and those on QO or SHN for COVID-19, as ELD has their records, their names will be auto-restored to the registers after the election without penalty.

OVERSEAS VOTING

10 On 29 June 2020, ELD had announced that overseas voting at the 10 overseas polling stations in Beijing, Canberra, Dubai, Hong Kong, London, New York, San Francisco, Shanghai, Tokyo and Washington will proceed, subject to the approval of the overseas authorities and the prevailing COVID-19 situation in those cities. The overseas polling stations will implement similar safety measures (e.g. temperature screening, requiring all voters to wear masks, safe distancing, sanitising hands, donning plastic gloves before collecting a ballot paper) for voting as those in Singapore. We similarly encourage overseas voters to exercise social responsibility, and they should remain home if unwell. Overseas polling stations will also implement the special voting hour between 7pm and 8pm on Polling Day. Any unwell voter with a temperature of 37.5 degrees Celsius and above will be turned away and asked to return between 7pm and 8pm to vote. Similar to the safety measures taken in Singapore, our overseas election officials serving unwell voters from 7pm to 8pm will don full personal protective equipment. Cleaning and disinfecting of the polling equipment (e.g. polling booth, self-inking 'X' pen) will be done after every voter's use during this hour. Overseas voters are also reminded to abide by the local laws and regulations put in place for COVID-19, including when making travel arrangements to vote.

ISSUED BY:
ELECTIONS DEPARTMENT
PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE

1 JULY 2020

Conditions for persons on SHN at home and on MC for ARI to leave their homes to vote during the special voting hour

- 1) Persons on SHN at home and MC for ARI can only vote during the special voting hour from 7pm to 8pm. They should disregard, and not go to vote at the recommended time-band indicated on their poll cards.
- 2) They must only leave home to go to the polling station to vote and nowhere else. They must return home to serve the rest of their SHN at home and MC for ARI immediately after voting.
- 3) They may walk or use their private vehicle, but should not use public transport, when travelling to vote and returning home. Those who require designated transport to and from the polling station can book a taxi from the list of dedicated booking hotlines provided in their SHN. The voter will have to pay for the transport.
- 4) They should keep the time they spend out of their home to the minimum needed to exercise their right to vote.
- 5) They should wear a mask properly and maintain safe distancing measures throughout the time out of home. They should minimise having close contact with other people as much as is practicable.
- 6) They must adhere to the rules set by the ELD and instructed by the officers at the polling station, which are intended to protect the safety and welfare of voters attending the polling station.
- 7) In addition, persons under SHN must call the SHN Helpline (6812-5555) before their departure, to inform the authorities of their intention to leave home to vote.

Voting procedures during normal voting hours and special voting hour

- 1 The procedure during normal voting hours from 8am to 7pm on Polling Day is:
 - (a) At temperature screening before voters enter the polling station, voters found to have fever (temperature 37.5 degrees Celsius and above) will not be allowed to enter the polling station to vote.
 - (b) They will be advised to return between 7pm and 8pm (termed the “special voting hour”) if they wish to vote.
 - (c) Police officer(s) will be stationed at the entrance to assist election officials to enforce this.
 - (d) Voters who are well are encouraged to vote during their recommended time-bands between 8am and 7pm. However, such voters who turn up in the special voting hour between 7pm and 8pm will be allowed to vote, as the law allows for voting from 8am to 8pm.

- 2 The procedure during the special voting hour from 7pm to 8pm is:
 - (a) There will be no temperature screening since voters with fever are allowed to vote during the special voting hour.
 - (b) ELD will maintain a smaller team of election officials at every polling station to manage voters during the special voting hour. They will don full personal protective equipment for additional protection.
 - (c) Candidates and polling agents are allowed to observe the conduct of poll during the special voting hour. Personal protective equipment is not required for them as they will not come into close contact with voters.
 - (d) Cleaners will sanitise the polling equipment (i.e. polling booth, self-inking ‘X’ pen) after each voter’s use.
 - (e) Polls will close at 8pm sharp. As per normal procedure, the ballot boxes will be sealed, witnessed by the candidates/polling agents, if present. The ballot boxes will then be delivered to their respective counting centres for counting.

Polling and counting proceedings for those on SHN at designated facilities

- 1 Before Polling Day
 - (a) The notice of the locations of the Special Polling Stations was published in the Gazette on 30 June 2020. If there are any additional Special Polling Stations after this date, the notice will be published in the Gazette on 7 July 2020.
 - (b) On the eve of Polling Day, ELD will distribute a notice setting out details of the polling procedures to voters on SHN at designated facilities (termed as SHN voters, or “SV” in short here).
- 2 The procedure for polling at each Special Polling Station is:
 - (a) Before the start of polls, the polling team will show to the candidates and polling agents present at the Special Polling Station that the ballot box is empty before sealing it. A copy of the SHN Voter Register, which will list the details of the voters at the premises, will be provided to the candidates and polling agents present.
 - (b) All SVs will remain in their room, and a mobile polling team will deliver the ballot paper to each SV in his or her room.
 - (c) Outside each SV’s room, the candidates and polling agents of the contesting parties for the electoral division in which the SV is voting may accompany the polling team to observe polling proceedings. As part of safe distancing, the candidates and polling agents of contesting parties from other electoral divisions will remain at a distance away.
 - (d) The SV will open the room door, stand a distance of at least 1 metre inside the room, lower his mask momentarily and show his identity card/passport to the polling team.
 - (e) Polling team will confirm SV’s identity, mark his record in the SHN Voter Register, read aloud the electoral division, polling district and SV’s voter serial number before issuing the ballot paper to the SV.
 - (f) SV will mark his ballot paper in private and thereafter deposit the marked ballot paper into the ballot box.
 - (g) In the event the room is shared by a family of SVs (e.g. married couple or family with more than one voter), polling team will repeat the process for each SV in the room.
 - (h) At close of polls, polling team will seal both slits of the ballot box and invite candidates and polling agents that are present to sign or affix their own seals on the ballot box.

- (i) Polling team will deliver the sealed ballot box (and other election documents), using the official buses and under police escort, to the centralised counting centre for counting. Only one candidate or polling agent per political party (or for every independent candidate or group of candidates) is allowed to board the bus during the transportation process.

3 The procedure for counting at the centralised counting centre will be similar to how votes cast by overseas electors are counted:

- (a) The centralised counting centre will receive the ballot boxes from the Special Polling Stations and place them on the Sorting Table. Once the ballot boxes from all Special Polling Stations have arrived, the Assistant Returning Officer (ARO) will invite candidates and counting agents present to inspect the sealed ballot boxes.
- (b) Counting of the ballot papers will be as follows:
 - i. At the Sorting Table, ballot papers from all ballot boxes will be mixed first before being sorted by Electoral Divisions.
 - ii. The ballot papers of each Electoral Division will then be counted at a specific counting table. Counting agents and candidates contesting in the Electoral Division will be invited to observe counting of the ballot papers at the counting table.
 - iii. Upon completion of counting, the ARO will announce the result to the candidates and counting agents present. Thereafter, the counting result for each Electoral Division will be transmitted to the Principal Counting Place of that Electoral Division for tallying.
 - iv. The counted ballot papers for the various Electoral Divisions will be sealed into packets and placed into the depository box, which will be transported to the Supreme Court for safekeeping.