

CHAPTER 3 CAUSES OF THE PROBLEMS

Introduction

3.1 To draw up measures to improve the management, planning and conduct of future elections, we have to further evaluate the problems identified in Chapter 2 to find out the main causes of these problems. We have examined the problems from five aspects, viz. organization, planning, preparation, operation and communication. This Chapter outlines our findings and observations.

Organization

Roles and Responsibilities of CAB, EAC and REO

3.2 CAB, EAC and REO are the three key organizations responsible for the policy and operational matters relating to the management, planning and conduct of elections in Hong Kong. In this section, we would examine the working relationship of these three bodies to see whether the existing organization structure is conducive to the conduct of elections in an open, honest, fair and efficient way. CAB is the policy bureau on constitutional affairs which takes care of, inter alia, policy on electoral affairs. In this aspect, CAB is mainly responsible for formulating electoral policies and enacting related principal legislation. EAC is an independent body set up under the EAC Ordinance (Cap. 541). It comprises three non-official members appointed by the Chief

Executive including the Chairman, who must be a Judge of the High Court. The statutory functions of the Commission include conducting and supervising elections, and making arrangements as it considers appropriate for the purpose of ensuring that elections are conducted openly, honestly and fairly. REO is the executive arm of EAC. It is a government department and under the charge of the CEO (a Directorate Staff at the rank of Senior Principal Executive Officer), provides the Commission with administrative support in the discharge of its statutory functions under the EAC Ordinance (Cap. 541).

3.3 EAC is empowered under the EAC Ordinance (Cap. 541) to make regulations relating to the conduct of an election. Examples included the EAC(Electoral Procedure)(Legislative Council)(Amendment) Regulation 2004 that was passed by LegCo on 9 July 2004 to implement, among others, the polling-cum-counting arrangement for GC votes in the Election. EAC may also issue guidelines on election-related matters under the Ordinance. REO assists EAC in the drafting and publication of the regulations and the guidelines. CAB, being the policy bureau on electoral affairs, is responsible for tabling the election-related regulations at LegCo and in line with established practice, takes the lead to attend LegCo meetings with REO (e.g. the CEO) to explain the regulations drawn up by EAC. This may cause confusion about the role of CAB, EAC and REO in electoral affairs and their relationship. In fact, neither EAC nor REO works to CAB but CAB has unavoidably been keeping liaison with the two bodies on electoral matters. For example, for the Election, CAB had attended the EAC meetings on draft

election-related regulations, and reminded EAC and REO of the need to ensure a sufficient supply of ballot papers and ballot boxes as a high voter turnout rate was expected. The actual planning and implementation work relating to the practical arrangements for an election are undertaken by REO under the direct command of EAC. In this regard, SCA had stressed at his meeting with the Committee the importance of ensuring the independence of elections from the Administration and the need to respect the independent statutory role of EAC in conducting and supervising elections.

3.4 For the Election, the EAC Chairman confirmed that EAC was responsible for devising the general policies and principles for the conduct of the election while REO took care of all the logistics and implementation details. Major issues, including matters relating to the preparation for the delineation of GCs, the draft amendment regulations, the draft electoral guidelines, adoption of the polling-cum-counting arrangement for GC votes, the rates of honorarium to polling and counting staff and the design of the new GC ballot paper and ballot box, were discussed at EAC meetings. According to the EAC Chairman, there were no regular meetings between EAC and REO but he had maintained close liaison with the CEO and did not consider that there was any problem with the communication between EAC and REO. We also note that REO had not conducted any briefings for EAC on the details of the practical arrangements on the polling day.

3.5 We note the merit of the existing organization structure of having EAC as an independent statutory body to conduct and supervise elections, and the resultant peculiar relationship among CAB, EAC and REO. However, given that EAC comprises only three non-official members working on a part-time basis without their own staff but just the secretariat support provided by REO, we have reservation on whether EAC is adequately equipped and able to closely supervise REO's daily work. For example, it is difficult to expect EAC to be closely involved in the capacity tests for the new GC ballot box and the UAT for IVRS. We understand that REO has informed EAC that the number of ballot boxes ordered was based on the results of the capacity tests but not the details of the tests such as the type of papers used in the tests. In addition, EAC members may lack the expertise or experience involved in making the practical arrangements for the Election such as the IVRS adopted in compiling the voter turnout figures and counting results. We consider that it is understandable for EAC to rely heavily on its executive arm, i.e. REO, on planning and making the operational arrangements for the polling day, in particular the implementation details.

3.6 On the other hand, REO is a government department while EAC is an independent statutory body made up solely of non-official members with no hire-and-fire power over REO. The line of command between the two bodies is not clear and "normal" when compared with the typical working relationship between a policy bureau and its working or professional department. Because of the nature of EAC and the existing mode of operation, REO may lack the necessary guidance and

supervision in their daily work. In addition, it is noted that the EAC Chairman and the then CEO have worked in their respective position in EAC and REO for more than seven years and have gradually developed a close working relationship. Because of the trust in each other and their close contacts, many issues might be reported or sorted out through informal communication between them instead of at formal meetings.

3.7 There were suggestions that REO should work under a policy bureau (e.g. CAB or the Home Affairs Bureau) and then EAC should play an overall monitoring role. This however may compromise the independence of the electoral process and defeat the whole purpose of the design of the existing organization structure, and is not desirable.

Set-up of REO

3.8 According to an established practice in place for over ten years, the civil service establishment of REO is adjusted in response to the electoral cycle. REO has a core establishment of 112 permanent posts mainly filled by general grades staff such as Executive Officers and Clerical Officers. Time-limited civil service posts will be created on a project basis for the preparation and conduct of LegCo and DC elections, and dealing with election-related complaints. Non-civil service contract (“NCSC”) staff will also be recruited to assist in the preparation of the elections. For the 2004 Voter Registration Drive and the Election, REO created four and 32 time-limited civil service posts respectively, and also recruited over 450 NCSC staff for the Election at the operational peak.

A new team named the Elections Division under the charge of a Chief Executive Officer will be set up in REO with some staff redeployed from other divisions in the election year to take care of the planning and implementation of the operational arrangements for the polling day. The organization structures of REO in a non-election and an election year respectively are **at Annex F**.

3.9 The senior management of REO is made up of experienced officers from the Executive Officer Grade who are professional managers in resource and system management. The CEO was supported by four officers at the rank of Chief Executive Officer who normally have over ten years of working experience in the Grade. Most of the REO permanent staff are general grades staff who are subject to posting every three to four years. Hence, there is a constant loss of experienced staff. This arrangement, in particular when involving the key personnel of REO, may have an adverse impact on the performance of the department when facing unexpected crisis. In this regard, it was noted that the head of the Elections Division concerned, who was also the Chief Commander in charge of CCC on the polling day, had participated in the conduct of the 2003 DC Election but not previous LegCo elections.

Check and Balance Mechanism

3.10 Existence of a check and balance mechanism can facilitate early identification and resolution of problems in a working process or in an organization, and is also vital to ensuring the integrity of an election.

We consider that an effective check and balance mechanism did exist in the electoral process to ensure that the Election was conducted openly, honestly and fairly despite the chaos on the polling day. For one thing, candidates might appoint election/polling/counting agents to assist them in closely monitoring the electoral process including sealing and opening of ballot boxes and determination of questionable ballot papers by PROs. In addition, two polling officers were required to work in pairs at each ballot paper issuing desk. After one of the officers had checked the elector's identification against the entry on the Final Register, the other officer would cross-check the information before deciding whether a GC (and FC as appropriate) ballot paper should be issued. When the vote counting (and re-counting, if necessary) at a counting station was completed, the PRO would report the counting result to SIC of CCC through IVRS. The ARO of the GC concerned would call back the PRO to verify the counting result before reporting the data to the RO. In addition, candidates/agents might request a re-count when the counting result of a counting station was announced at the station or when the counting result of a GC as a whole was released at the Central Counting Station.

3.11 On the other hand, because of the peculiar relationship among CAB, EAC and REO and the relatively “informal” and “unclear” line of command between EAC and REO as mentioned in paragraph 3.6 above, the existence and if so, the effectiveness of the check and balance mechanism for the practical arrangements on the polling day is put to doubt. In this regard, it is worth noting that REO did not make any

formal report to EAC (not to say CAB) about the shortage of GC ballot boxes on the polling day. According to the EAC Chairman, he was only aware of the severity of the problem in the afternoon when it was reported in the news reports on radios and televisions that some electors had been refused entry into polling stations because all ballot boxes were full.

3.12 The check and balance mechanism also did not seem to work effectively within REO when the details of the practical arrangements for the polling day were drawn up. As set out in Chapter 2, in our view, over-estimation of the capacity of the new GC ballot box was the main cause of the shortage problem that led to the adoption of a number of controversial stopgap measures and the resultant chaos and complaints on the polling day. The estimation was based on two capacity tests conducted by REO staff. Given the importance of ensuring the sufficiency of ballot boxes in an election, there should have had a mechanism under which the results of the capacity tests would be cross-checked by a separate team in REO to avoid any possible mistakes arising from, say, errors committed when conducting the tests or unsound personal judgement of the staff concerned. However, even at the meetings with the Committee, REO could not explain why no further capacity test was undertaken for the new GC ballot box when the design of the new GC ballot paper and the type of papers used was confirmed. Neither could they explain why the design flaw of the new GC ballot box (i.e. the ballot papers inserted into the ballot box did not fall into a neat pile as expected) could not have been discovered during the capacity tests,

which should be quite obvious according to the tests conducted by the Committee. Similarly, the inadequacy of the UAT on IVRS was considered as one of the main reasons for the failure of the system on the polling day. The Technical Services Team of REO is responsible for overseeing the project and testing the system with CTIL, the vendor. When conducting the investigation after the Election, a separate team in REO criticized that the test cases in the simulation did not represent the real life situation. Such a fundamental problem should have been revealed if there was an effective check and balance mechanism within REO on these critical tasks.

Planning

3.13 The two EAC reports highlighted that the introduction of two types of new electoral equipment, viz. the new GC ballot box and ballot paper, and the polling-cum-counting arrangement for the first time altogether for a large-scale general election had caused serious unforeseen problems affecting the smooth conduct of the poll in a number of polling stations in the Election. To the Committee, the new measures were drawn up with good intention - to facilitate electors and candidates by providing more information on each candidate on the ballot paper and speeding up the counting process. However, given the scale of the Election, that involved the registered electorate of 3,207,227 and 199,539 for GCs and FCs respectively, and the adoption of a number of new features for the first time, every key stage and step of the electoral process should have been thought through beforehand. If there were

sufficient planning over all the resources required including manpower, electoral equipment and the related contingency plans, most, if not all, of the problems occurred on the polling day could have been avoided or at least their extent and the subsequent impacts could have been reduced to the minimum.

Manpower

3.14 On manpower, since the electoral process is quite labour intensive, sufficiency of electoral staff and their quality are vital to the smooth conduct of the poll. As in previous general elections, REO launched a service-wide recruitment exercise to invite suitable serving civil servants from various government departments to serve as electoral staff for the conduct of the Election. REO has advised that the general response to the recruitment exercise was moderate. Out of a total of 21,815 applications received, 14,969 staff were appointed as polling and counting staff. There were fewer choices of candidates for the appointments as compared to the recruitment exercises in previous elections (25,000 and 22,000 applications were received for the 2000 LegCo Election and the 2003 DC Election respectively). It is however hard to establish whether the slight decrease of the honorarium (about 5.9%) for polling and counting staff in the Election as compared with that in the 2003 DC Election because of the civil service pay cut had resulted in the less encouraging response. With the adoption of the polling-cum-counting arrangement for GC votes, polling staff of 485 polling stations were required to take up counting duties as well. All

polling-cum-counting staff were required to work on one single shift throughout the poll though PROs were asked to make their own arrangements for their staff to take breaks to have meals, take rest and cast their votes. Even without any unexpected incidents like those on the polling day, the staff were expected to work continuously for over 20 hours. Even with some breaks, the shift was so long that the staff were unavoidably more prone to fatigue and would make mistakes more easily. We therefore have strong reservation on the manpower planning for the Election.

3.15 There were also comments that the long working shift had driven away some experienced polling/counting staff and hence resulted in the chaos. According to REO's records, out of the 14,969 polling and counting staff recruited, 9,713 (about 65%) were experienced and have worked in one or more previous elections. Among the 516 PROs (15 as reserve), 412 (79.8%) were experienced and 306 of them have served as PROs in past elections. REO does not consider that the polling and counting staff were inexperienced and that inexperience of the staff was the reason for the chaos on the polling day. In our view, the incidents/complaints mentioned in Chapter 2 or the EAC reports have clearly shown that at least some PROs were not familiar with the electoral procedure and the related statutory requirements. This view was also highlighted by some political parties and ROs respectively at their meetings with and in their written submissions to the Committee. We also have reservation on the ability of some PROs in handling the unexpected incidents on the polling day, which may be affected by their

experience. Besides, it is noted that polling staff spent much of their time in dealing with complaints from candidates/agents/public and many of the complaints were electioneering-related. To enable the polling staff, in particular PROs, to concentrate on the polling work, we suggest that consideration should be given to prohibit electioneering on the polling day.

Venues

3.16 As regards polling stations, apart from ensuring that there are sufficient stations so that electors do not need to travel too far to cast their votes, it is also important to make sure that the location, size and physical setting of the venues concerned are suitable for use as polling stations. As mentioned in Chapter 2, overcrowding of some stations was one of the major problems causing the chaos on the polling day. It is also worth noting that according to some PROs, their respective polling stations were so small that it was difficult to convert them into a counting station, especially within 30 minutes as required (in this regard, it is noted that the Operation Manual only stipulates that the conversion should be completed as soon as possible). Such problems should have been revealed and hence appropriate advice could have been given to the PROs concerned in advance if each potential venue had been inspected carefully beforehand.

3.17 REO also considered that HKITEC was less desirable than Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre (“HKCEC”) for setting up the

CCC in terms of location and size of the venue. However, since HKCEC was not available on the fallback day (i.e. 19 September 2004), REO booked HKITEC instead for the Election. Different teams of CCC were located in various venues and even those stationed in HKITEC were located in two separate floors, which was not conducive to effective communication and co-ordination when facing crisis. While appreciating REO's difficulty in booking HKCEC for setting up CCC before the election date is decided (that normally takes place at the beginning of the election year or at the end of the preceding year) as full payment is required, we consider that REO should further liaise with the venue management on feasible ways to pencil-mark the venue as early as possible or locate other suitable venue.

Electoral Equipment

3.18 We consider that ballot papers and ballot boxes are the two most important types of electoral equipment and it should be REO's prime mission to ensure their sufficient supply and security on the polling day. As elaborated in Chapter 2, the new GC ballot box was supposed to be tailor-made for the new GC ballot paper so that ballot papers inserted after being folded once into the ballot box would fall into a neat pile and could be retrieved readily for counting. We agree with REO's approach of taking an overall view over the planning of the new GC ballot paper and ballot box. However, sufficient attention should have been given to the capacity tests since they were the basis for deciding the number of ballot boxes ordered. If there were good planning, the capacity tests

should have been conducted with the papers used for printing the new ballot papers. The reason given by REO that they were occupied by other electoral work when the design and papers used for the new GC ballot paper were confirmed was not a convincing reason for not re-testing the capacity of the new ballot box.

Contingency Plans

3.19 According to REO, contingency plans for the Election were mainly drawn up based on experience gained from previous elections. As set out in the EAC Final Report, contingency measures were put in place to cater for unforeseen circumstances such as inclement weather or other emergencies like fire or power failure. In addition, four emergency depots with reserve staff were set up to replenish supply of electoral equipment, and polling/counting staff when necessary. The arrangement was however proved to be not sufficient or effective to cater for a wide-spread shortage of electoral equipment on the polling day. There was also a lack of a readily available contingency plan for manual compilation of the key statistical returns such as voter turnout figures in case of the failure of IVRS. The Emergency Plan activated by REO with CTIL to verify the voter turnout figures of the 501 polling stations after the close of poll was drawn up on the polling day.

3.20 While agreeing that it is very difficult, if not impossible, to draw up plans for every possible scenario that may or may not occur, we consider that there should be an effective crisis management system to

enable prompt decision and action to be taken on all contingencies including those unthinkable ones. In this regard, a monitoring and reporting system over the operation of the 501 polling stations is essential. However, such system did not seem to exist or did not work effectively on the polling day. We note that 18 DLOs were appointed as the contact officers or co-ordinators between the PROs in each District and the respective RO/AROs, and also between the polling stations in the District and CCC. He should keep RO and CCC informed of significant events in the District. However, CCC's reaction and handling of the requests for additional GC ballot boxes from polling stations on the polling day have reflected that it failed to have an accurate assessment of the overall situation including the extent and severity of the shortage problem, and implement a well co-ordinated replenishment plan accordingly.

Preparation

3.21 In this section, we will examine whether sufficient preparatory work has been done for the Election. It is to a certain extent related with the planning for the Election set out in the previous section.

Training

3.22 Training plays an important role in preparing the staff concerned to better discharge their duties. We note that a general briefing of about three and a half hours was conducted for all polling-cum-counting staff to enable them to have a general idea of the electoral arrangements for the

Election. An intensive briefing of about three hours was also conducted for all PROs and DPROs to familiarize them with the relevant provisions of the electoral legislation, guidelines and so on. The related CD Rom was also distributed to all APROs after the briefing. In addition, a workshop of about three hours on compilation of statistics was organized for all DPROs, APROs and other polling officers responsible for compiling statistical returns on the polling day. A general briefing of about two hours and a mock counting session of about three hours were organized for the some 750 FC counting staff. The EAC Chairman also conducted a general briefing for ROs, and a separate briefing for candidates/agents on the electoral legislation and guidelines. In addition, an Operation Manual was issued by REO to the PROs, DPROs and APROs.

3.23 Based on the views received by the Committee, there were calls for enhancing the training of polling staff, in particular that for PROs. We have also received comments from both political parties and ROs that the performance of PROs was uneven and that some PROs were not familiar with the electoral procedure and related requirements. Some PROs whom the Committee has met pointed out that the Operation Manual was not distributed before the briefing session as in previous elections and hence they had no chance to study the Manual beforehand and raise questions, if any, at the briefing. Our assessment of the major problems on the polling day as set out in Chapter 2 also revealed that the staff concerned, including those of CCC and the polling staff, were not well prepared for handling crisis like the one occurred on the polling day.

In addition, we note that there was no tailor-made training for those REO staff responsible for handling enquiries or calls for assistance from polling stations. The way that the staff of CCC Helpdesk 2 had handled the requests for additional GC ballot boxes from polling stations as revealed by the PROs at their meetings with the Committee has clearly shown that the staff did not discharge their duties properly.

3.24 In addition, there were comments that the related training/briefing for candidates/agents was inadequate. Although the EAC Chairman did conduct a general briefing for all candidates/agents on the electoral legislation and guidelines, the fact that not all of the counting agents concerned were able to challenge the decision of the PROs based on the related statutory requirements³ when they were not allowed to enter or were evicted from the polling station when it was converted into a counting station has reflected that there is room for enhancement of the training/briefing for candidates/agents, in particular those newcomers. This would help reduce complaints arising from misunderstanding of the related requirements and procedures and hence relieve polling staff to do other electoral work.

Other Preparatory Work

3.25 There was other evidence showing that the preparatory work for the Election had not been done comprehensively enough. For example,

³ As explained in paragraph 2.43, the EAC(EP)(LC) Reg (Cap. 541D) and the Guidelines stipulate that a candidate as well as an election agent and a counting agent of such candidate may stay in a polling station while it is closed for the preparation for the counting of votes.

there were errors in the Operation Manual that led to the eviction or exclusion of candidates or their agents from polling stations as detailed in Chapter 2. The shortage problem of GC ballot boxes and the system failure of IVRS were mainly due to the problems with the tests conducted on the capacity of the new ballot box and that of IVRS respectively.

Operation

Set-up of CCC

3.26 CCC set up by REO was responsible for co-ordinating and monitoring the electoral arrangements on the polling day. To evaluate the problems leading to the chaos on the polling day from the operation aspect, we need to firstly examine the set-up of CCC. The major teams of CCC were located at different venues. The Central Command Post stationed at HKITEC in Kowloon Bay was under the charge of the head of the Elections Division of REO, who is at the rank of Chief Executive Officer. Under the Central Command Post, there were four main helpdesks/units. Helpdesk 1, stationed at Quarry Bay and under the charge of a Senior Executive Officer, was responsible for deployment of staff (including the 170 reserve polling staff stationed at the four emergency depots) and advising on the content of the Operation Manual. Helpdesk 2, stationed at HKITEC and under the charge of an Executive Officer I, was responsible for provision of electoral equipment to polling stations including ballot boxes. The Statistics Unit of SIC was stationed at HKITEC and under the charge of a Senior Executive Officer. It was

responsible for monitoring the reporting of statistics by polling/ counting stations including voter turnout figures and counting results, and providing the information to the Press Centre etc. The IVRS Hotline of SIC, stationed at Quarry Bay and under the charge of an Executive Officer I, was set up to handle enquiries from polling/counting stations on the use of IVRS. There was also an Election Enquiry Hotline in CCC, which was located in Wanchai and under the charge of a Senior Executive Officer, set up to answer general enquiries from polling stations and the public. It is worth noting that even those teams that were stationed at HKITEC were located at two separate floors. The organization of CCC including their locations is **at Annex G**.

3.27 Placing various teams of CCC in different locations would adversely affect the communication and co-ordination among the teams and in turn the performance of CCC especially when facing crisis. We do not consider it a satisfactory arrangement. For example, prompt response to the wide-spread shortage of GC ballot boxes required close co-ordination between Helpdesk 2, which oversaw the provision of ballot boxes, and Helpdesk 1, which was responsible for staff deployment including the 170 reserve staff. In this regard, it should be more efficient to ask the reserve staff stationed at the four emergency depots instead of the staff manning the hotlines of Helpdesk 2 in HKITEC to deliver additional ballot boxes to polling stations by taxi.

3.28 Similarly, apart from deploying a project manager at the Statistics Unit in HKITEC, CTIL was stationed at its office in Quarry Bay.

The Statistics Unit of CCC and CTIL mainly communicated by telephone on the polling day. This, again, was not satisfactory and not conducive to the effective handling of crisis like the system failure on the polling day including identification of problems and formulation of solutions.

3.29 Besides, we consider that the set-up of CCC including the level of the officers involved was not adequate to cope with the problems occurred on the polling day given their extent and implications. For example, handling the wide-spread shortage problem of GC ballot boxes required prompt action and good co-ordination among different teams of CCC as well as with other government departments. Given their severity and urgency, the problems should have been escalated to the CEO and EAC members without delay. However, the existing set-up of CCC did not comprise any system or special task force that can be triggered or formed when necessary.

Supervision

3.30 Apart from providing adequate training and guidelines to the polling and counting staff, close supervision of the actual operation of the polling and counting stations on the polling day is also important for ensuring the successful conduct of the poll. In this regard, we note that each EAC member including the Chairman had his/her individual visit itinerary throughout the polling day that covered a total of 23 polling stations and 11 counting stations. They were accompanied by three senior officers from REO during the visits and the EAC Chairman was

accompanied by the CEO during his visits. These officers were responsible for assisting the EAC members in identifying areas for improvement, tendering advice to PROs and to help resolve problems, if any, on the spot. In addition, as mentioned in paragraph 3.20 above, DLOs were appointed to be the co-ordinators between polling stations and CCC. However, there was no inspection system enabling REO to have a close supervision on the actual operation of the polling/ counting stations. Based on the submissions received and the complaints set out in the two EAC reports, the requirements and procedures set out in the Operation Manual were not strictly observed in some polling stations. For example, in some polling stations, issue of FC ballot papers was handled by one designated issuing desk instead of being issued together with the GC ballot papers at different issuing desks as set out in the Operation Manual. In addition, the PROs did not consult CCC before resorting to use cardboard boxes as temporary ballot boxes pending the arrival of additional GC ballot boxes. Without an effective inspection system, REO is not able to closely monitor the operation of individual polling stations and above all, to ensure that the stipulated procedures and requirements were strictly followed. In addition, such an inspection system can enable CCC to have a better picture of the overall situation when there were widespread problems like the shortage of GC ballot boxes on the polling day.

Re-counting Arrangement

3.31 Under the established arrangement, any candidate/agent may

raise a request for re-count at a counting station when the counting result of the station is released or at the Central Counting Station when the overall counting result of a GC is announced. All counting staff are required to remain in the counting station until the counting results are announced upon completion of the counting of all counting stations in the same GC and there are no requests for re-count. The working hours of the polling-cum-counting staff were greatly extended in the Election under such arrangement. An alternative is to conduct re-counting upon requests made at the Central Counting Station by the Station itself instead of individual counting stations.

Communication

3.32 Both effective internal communication and external communication are important for identifying and resolving problems at an early stage, and avoiding unnecessary misunderstanding that can be very damaging. Internal communication includes communication within REO, communication between EAC and REO, communication between CCC and the polling/counting stations, and communication between REO and other relevant bodies including CTIL and other government departments like the Police. As set out in Chapter 2, there are no formal regular meetings between EAC and REO and their communication is to a certain extent quite informal. In addition, there was no reporting system enabling timely reports on crisis like the widespread shortage of GC ballot boxes and the system failure of IVRS to the CEO and EAC on the polling day. That CCC was not able to fully recognize the severity of

the shortage problem of GC ballot boxes had reflected the ineffective communication between CCC and polling stations, which had affected the capability and performance of CCC in handling the crisis. We also consider that if there were better co-ordination with the Police in the replenishment of GC ballot boxes, the lead time between the requests were made and the arrival of the additional boxes for the polling stations should not have been so long.

3.33 It was also noted that neither EAC nor REO had made any announcements on the problems occurred on the polling day and the follow-up actions being taken, including the shortage of GC ballot boxes, EAC's decision to open the ballot boxes to rearrange the ballot papers inside the ballot boxes in the presence of candidates/agents/police officers pending the arrival of additional boxes, and the delay in the announcement of the counting results pending the completion of the manual verification of the voter turnout figures. We believe that enhancing transparency will enable the stakeholders to better understand what is going on, and hence avoid unnecessary suspicion and complaints and earn public understanding and support.