

## Enthusiastic voting for the competitive sixth Legislative Assembly Election



The sixth Legislative Assembly Election of the Macao SAR was held on 17 September 2017. The sixth Legislative Assembly comprises 33 legislators: 14 directly elected, 12 indirectly elected and seven appointed legislators. The number of members remained unchanged.

Both the numbers of candidate groups and candidates for direct election to the sixth Legislative Assembly broke the records, with 186 candidates from 24 groups contesting 14 seats (there were originally 192 candidates from 25 lists, however one group announced its withdrawal, after confirmation of the list of candidates and one candidate from another group withdrew). There were over 300,000 registered voters in Macao, 30,000 more than for the fifth Legislative Assembly Election. As both the numbers of candidate lists and voters had increased, the sixth Legislative Assembly Election was considered the most competitive of Macao's elections. This was the first time there were more candidates than seats in indirect elections. There were six candidate lists representing five sectors, with two candidate lists contesting for three seats in the professional sector.

Various sectors and residents of Macao actively participated in the sixth Legislative Assembly Election, fulfilling their civic responsibility. The total number of votes reached new high since Macao's return to the motherland, reflecting the rise of civic awareness and a joint force for the development of Macao. The new Legislative Assembly was successfully formed following the smooth completion of the election.

## Optimising legislation and enhancing election quality

In 2016, after a comprehensive consultation, the Government amended the Legislative Assembly Electoral Law, striving to optimise the electoral system for the Legislative Assembly, strengthen fairness of elections and enhance competition in indirect elections by perfecting specifications regarding election campaigns, strengthening enforcement against illegal electoral activities, improving electoral organisation work, and optimising the eligibility for running for the Legislative Assembly Election and the regulation on holding concurrent positions.

In the direct election, political organisations or any nomination committee formed by 300 to 500 eligible voters are qualified to submit their candidate lists. Natural persons aged 18 and above, who are Macao permanent residents, may vote to elect 14 directly elected members in the Legislative Assembly Election, provided that they have completed voter registration and been entered into the register of voters published in January 2017.

In the indirect elections, any nomination committee should have at least 20 percent of members who are legal persons belonging to the relevant constituency. All these legal persons should have been entered into the register of voters published in January 2017. If the calculation of the percentage results in a figure that is not an integer, the integer with a smaller value that is closest to the result should be taken. Nomination committees may submit candidate lists through their trustees.

According to the register of corporate voters published in January 2017, the total number of valid voters was 858. The numbers of valid corporate voters in each sector were as follows: Industrial, Commercial and Financial: 102; Labour: 75; Professional: 55; Social Service: 134; Cultural: 148; Education: 23; and Sports: 321.

Further, the newly amended Legislative Assembly Electoral Law specifies that candidates should sign a declaration that pledges adherence to the Basic Law of the Macao Special Administrative Region and allegiance to the Macao Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China. The amended Legislative Assembly Electoral Law also introduced a deposit (25,000 patacas) system. The deposit will be forfeited if the number of votes obtained by the candidate list is less than that of the nomination committee. The Government's aim in introducing these new measures was to raise the threshold for election, and enhance the credibility of candidates and the solemnity of the election.

## Orderly commencement of election work and maintaining a clean and fair election

To better coordinate and organise the sixth Legislative Assembly Election, on 25 January 2017 Chief Executive Chui Sai On appointed the chairman and members of the Electoral Affairs Commission for the Legislative Assembly Election (CAEAL) as follows: Chairman Tong Hio Fong; members Mr Lai U Hou, Mr Jose Maria da Fonseca Tavares, Mr Kou Peng Kuan, Mr Iong Kong Leong and Mr Chan Chi Ping, in accordance with the Basic Law of the Macao Special Administrative Region and the current Legislative Assembly Election Law.

From February 2017, the CAEAL enhanced communications to inform the public regarding the latest situation with election preparations, through regular meetings, seminars, the media, press conferences and the election website. An election campaign reporting platform was also set up, for the public to access and supervise election campaigns and non-electoral campaign activities.

Meanwhile, the CAEAL held working meetings with various departments of the Government to discuss the execution of election procedures, information exchange mechanism and enforcement against election irregularities, and clarified the procedures for handling minor violations, to ensure fairness and impartiality of the election. Extensive promotions through traditional and new media were launched, such as producing promotional videos and news features, to enable citizens of all age groups to easily access information about the election.

To ensure integrity of the electoral process, the CAEAL and the Commission Against Corruption (CCAC) jointly established a unified complaints hotline and online complaints platform, to encourage residents to fulfil their duties and obligations to report any election violations. An official WeChat account was also opened to provide quick and convenient access to information about the CAEAL and a clean election.

Committed to cracking down on vote-buying, the CCAC established an anti-bribery team, focusing on possible irregularities in the Legislative Assembly Election, and conducting intelligence gathering, research and planning to proactively safeguard against bribery.

According to the amended Legislative Assembly Electoral Law, legal persons and candidates should report any electoral campaign activity they organise or participate in. The CCAC continues conducting inspections of relevant activities. From March to September in 2017, the CCAC undertook 5,089 anti-bribery actions, including 2,907 inspections to restaurants and banquet venues, 1,850 inspections to community activity venues and 332 inspections on allowance disbursement and travel activities.

In addition, the CCAC formed the Volunteer Team for Clean Elections 2017, recruiting 83 Form 3 to Form 6 students in Macao to assist the CCAC in organising seminars and participating in outdoor promotions to spread the message of clean elections to the public.

## **Four-year term of office commences for elected Legislative Assembly members**

According to the Executive Order published in the *Macao SAR Gazette*, the budget for the sixth Legislative Assembly Election in 2017 was 55,555,700 patacas. The maximum limit for each candidate list's election campaign expenses for the Legislative Assembly Election 2017 was 3,549,622 patacas.

In the sixth Legislative Assembly Election, 192 candidates from 25 lists were confirmed to be qualified for direct elections. As one candidate and one list subsequently withdrew from the election, there were 186 candidates from 24 lists contesting 14 seats, which still broke the record in terms of numbers of lists and candidates. For indirect elections, 15 candidates from six candidate lists contested 12 seats in five sectors, including two lists in the professional sector. This was the first ever competitive indirect election in the Macao SAR.

There were 305,615 eligible voters for the sixth Legislative Assembly Election, about 10 percent more than the figure of 276,034 in 2013. The increase showed that more residents exercised their civil rights, as empowered under the Basic Law. To ensure a smooth election process with the increased number of voters, 37 polling stations for direct elections were opened in 36 polling venues, six more than in the last election. Five polling stations were opened for indirect elections, in one polling venue.

On 17 September, the election date, the polling stations were open from 9:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. With a record-breaking 174,872 votes cast in direct elections, the voter turnout rate was 57.22 percent, 2.2 percent more than in the previous election. The voter turnout rate for indirect elections was 91.67 percent, which was higher than the previous election.

On 19 September, the General Audit Committee of the Legislative Assembly Election announced the audited results. Of the 174,872 votes counted, 172,628 were valid, 944 were blank, and 1,300 were invalid.

On 27 September, according to the Basic Law of the Macao Special Administrative Region and the Electoral System for the Legislative Assembly of the Macao SAR, Chief Executive Chui Sai On appointed seven legislators to the Legislative Assembly through an executive order. They were: Ma Chi Seng, Pang Chuan, Wu Chou Kit, Lao Chi Ngai, Fong Ka Chio, Iau Teng Pio and Chan Wa Keong.

On 28 September, the *Macao SAR Gazette* published an announcement by the Court of Final Appeal, and confirmed the results of the direct and indirect elections of the Legislative Assembly Election according to the Legislative Assembly Electoral Law. The 14 directly elected legislators were: Mak Soi Kun, Lei Cheng I, Si Ka Lon, Jose Maria Pereira Coutinho, Ho Ion Sang, Au Kam San, Leong On Kei, Song Pek Kei, Ng Kuok Cheong, Lam Iok Fong, Wong Kit Cheng, Sou Ka Hou, Zheng Anting and Leong Sun Iok. The 12 indirectly elected legislators were: Ho Iat Seng, Kou Hoi In, Chui Sai Peng Jose, Ip Sio Kai, Lam Lon Wai, Lei Chan U, Chui Sai Cheong, Chan Iek Lap, Vong Hin Fai, Chan Hon, Cheung Lup Kwan Vitor and Chan Chak Mo. All 33 members of the sixth Legislative Assembly of Macao were returned.

On 16 October, Chief Executive Chui Sai On swore in all the legislators at the Government Headquarters. The four-year term of office commenced. The first plenary meeting was held on the same day, to elect the president, vice president and the first and second secretaries by and from among its members. Ho Iat Seng, Chui Sai Cheong, Kou Hoi In and Chan Hon were elected to these positions, respectively.

## Enhance qualitative development of industries and promote adequate economic diversification

In 2017, Macao's economy gradually emerged from its in-depth adjustment period, to commence a stable upturn. Annual GDP grew by 9.1 percent to 404.2 billion patacas, putting a halt to the economic contraction over the past three years. Annual GDP per capita was 622,803 patacas. Public finance was sound and stable. The unemployment rate was maintained at two percent. Gross gaming revenue was 265.743 billion patacas, an increase of 19.1 percent over the previous year, representing the first growth in the past three years. On the whole, steady development of society was maintained.

In the area of economy and finance, the Government adopted an administrative approach aiming to “strengthen the foundations for maintaining innovative development and enhancing our driving force; foster employment and safeguard the people’s well-being to boost vitality”. It launched a series of initiatives to develop Macao as “One Centre, One Platform”, and speed up adequate economic diversification as set out in the country’s 13th Five-Year Plan and the Five-