

\$21m campaign for Legco polls

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THE Government is to launch a \$21 million publicity campaign, more than twice that spent on the District Board and Municipal Council elections, to try to increase voter turnout for September's Legislative Council elections.

Kicking off the campaign yesterday, Secretary for Constitutional Affairs Nicholas Ng Wing-fui said spending such a large sum did not mean the Government feared a low voter turnout.

Mr Ng declined to predict the turnout rate but emphasised that there was no direct link between

voters' response and the amount of money spent on promoting the poll.

"We always hope for a high turnout in elections with more and more people casting their votes," he said.

About \$9 million was spent on promoting last year's District Board election and the Municipal Council election in March.

On whether China's threat to dissolve Legco in 1997 would discourage voters, Mr Ng said it would be up to individual electors.

He added that the record numbers of voters in recent elections showed Hong Kong people were more conscious of their voting rights than ever before. They would be able to make their own judgments.

For electors to learn more about candidates, the Government will organise television forums as polling day approaches.

District offices will organise election forums.

● The Registration and Electoral Office was accused yesterday of being unfair to casual workers and the unemployed.

Chairman of the 10,000-strong Hong Kong Construction Industry Employees General Union, Poon To-chuen, said many of his members had been discriminated against in the registration exercise due to their failure to find a permanent job.

He said most of the members, doing casual jobs either for con-

struction sites or piece meal decoration projects, were earlier advised by the office to register as a self-employed person.

They were told they could join the first group of the nine new function constituencies – primary production, power and construction.

"But later more than 100 of them received phone calls from the office questioning their eligibility to register as voters.

"They were told that since they failed to have a job at the moment when they talked into the office, they could not be recognised as an on-the-job person, and should have no right to vote for the new functional constituencies," he said.

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