

OGCIO enhances service to support “StayHomeSafe” mobile app

A spokesman for the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer (OGCIO) announced today (March 25) that more manpower was deployed to man the telephone hotline to strengthen the support to persons under quarantine in using "StayHomeSafe" mobile app. Email and SMS channels were also set up for them to seek assistance.

For any enquiries on the mobile app, person under quarantine may email his/her name and contact to shs@ogcio.gov.hk or send his/her name via SMS message to 5394 3388. Designated staff will follow up and provide assistance. The hotline 5394 3150 is also in service.

The OGCIO is also re-sending SMS messages to those who have yet to activate the mobile app as a reminder.

Government welcomes various sectors to help strengthen social distancing

A Government spokesman today (March 24) welcomed the closure of sports and recreational facilities in various clubs in support of the anti-epidemic strategy of the Government and expressed the hope that more organisations will follow suit.

The Government yesterday (March 23) announced a series of enhancements to anti-epidemic measures. Among them, the Government would request clubs on private recreational leases to close their recreational and sports facilities, changing rooms and children's playrooms on their premises to promote the reduction of social contacts and gatherings. The Government also appealed to other private clubs and facilities in residential complexes to adopt the same measure to reduce the risk of spreading of the virus.

The Home Affairs Bureau issued letters yesterday to lessees of all 65 sites granted by way of Private Recreational Leases to require them to close all sports and recreational facilities as soon as practicable until further notice. The Government spokesman is pleased to note that some clubs today closed the relevant facilities accordingly to support the Government's anti-epidemic work, adding that the Home Affairs Bureau will continue to follow up on the execution of the measure.

The Government noted that some private clubs outside of the category

mentioned above also took the initiative to respond to the appeal by the Government. For example, the Hong Kong Club was closed starting tonight, providing only food take-out services for members, while the Hong Kong Jockey Club will suspend all its recreational facilities and large-scale banquets starting tomorrow (March 25). Welcoming the move, the Government spokesman said that voluntary participation by more organisations will help build social momentum toward fighting the disease together.

On the proposal to legislate for the temporary prohibition of the sale and supply of alcoholic drinks by restaurants, bars and clubs with liquor licences, the Government spokesman said that, as pointed out by the Chief Executive in her response to the media this morning, this is a very difficult issue and the Government is willing to continue to listen to the views of the industry and the community for further study.

CHP to further extend Enhanced Laboratory Surveillance Programme

A spokesman for the Department of Health (DH) today (March 24) announced that the Centre for Health Protection will further extend its Enhanced Laboratory Surveillance Programme, which provides a free testing service for COVID-19, to cover asymptomatic inbound travellers arriving from the United Kingdom, other countries in Europe and the United States by phases starting tomorrow (March 25), with an aim of identifying cases of COVID-19 early in order to minimise the risk of community transmission.

In response to the latest development of COVID-19, the DH will further extend the current practice of virus testing against asymptomatic inbound travellers. Starting at midnight tomorrow, a specimen container will at the first stage be provided to inbound travellers arriving at the Hong Kong International Airport from the United Kingdom and other countries in Europe for collecting deep throat saliva samples for relevant testing.

Inbound travellers who are provided with the specimen containers are required to collect their deep throat saliva sample by themselves at home in accordance with the instructions, and to have their family members or friends deliver it to any of the collection points in the same morning. Samples can be sent to 13 designated chest clinics or dermatological clinics under the DH from 9am to 11am on Monday to Sunday and some General Out-patients clinics under the Hospital Authority from 8.30am to 9.30 am on Monday to Friday (except public holiday).

If a sample tests positive, the CHP will notify the person concerned as early as possible and arrange for admission to a public hospital for treatment. In general, if no notification is received within three working

days after returning a sample, it means the test result is negative and the person concerned is required to continue the quarantine until the quarantine period ends.

A spokesman for the DH urged inbound travellers who are provided with specimen containers to collect and arrange to hand in their deep throat saliva sample as early as possible so that relevant virus testing can be arranged by the CHP's Public Health Laboratory Services Branch as soon as possible. This will help identify arrivals who are asymptomatic and minimise the risk of community transmission.

Update on COVID-19 test centres

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

From March 20 to 9pm today (March 24), 299 and 73 travellers have been referred to the test centres at the AsiaWorld-Expo and North Lantau Hospital respectively for COVID-19 viral test. So far, 339 travellers have negative test results for COVID-19 and have returned to their residence to continue the 14-day home quarantine.

Preliminary positive test results will be further confirmed by the Department of Health and announced as confirmed cases in due course.

Government steps up enforcement against breaches of quarantine orders and appeals to public to report breaches

A Government spokesman today (March 24) said that since the compulsory quarantine requirement for persons arriving at Hong Kong from foreign places was implemented from March 19, a total of 24 persons have been sent to the quarantine centres due to breaches of quarantine orders.

The Police, following reports from members of the public and detection via the Government electronic monitoring system, carried out immediate on-

site investigations today. Ten persons were found to have left their dwelling places without permission and were subsequently sent to the quarantine centres. The Department of Health and the Police will continue to follow up investigations to collect more evidence for the Department of Justice to consider prosecution.

The Government appeals to the public to make use of the "e-Report Room" (www.erc.police.gov.hk/cmisercc/CCC/PolicePublicPage?language=en) online platform and the "Tell me@1823" mobile application to report suspected cases of breaching quarantine orders. The Government would like to express its gratitude to benevolent members of the public who provided information through Internet platform which in turn facilitated the seizure of seven persons who were suspected to have breached quarantine orders yesterday (March 23) alone. Members of the public may also report suspected breaches of quarantine orders through report rooms of police stations (www.police.gov.hk/ppp_en/contact_us.html#rr) or the "1823 Citizen's Easy Link" hotline.

Regarding Internet rumours that members of the public should call the Department of Health's hotline 2125 1122 to report breaching of quarantine order cases, the Government clarifies that the hotline is set up to facilitate symptomatic persons to contact the Department of Health for help and should not be used for reporting breaches.

The Government once again strongly appeals to the public to follow the quarantine requirement strictly in order to protect the health of their own selves and others. The measure is of utmost importance to prevent the spreading of COVID-19 in the community. Leaving dwelling places without permission is a criminal offence and offenders are subject to a maximum imprisonment of six months and a fine of \$25,000.