

# LegCo Secretariat to resume public services gradually

The following is issued on behalf of the Legislative Council Secretariat:

The Legislative Council (LegCo) Secretariat announced today (August 21) that the public services of the Secretariat will be resumed gradually from next Monday (August 24). The following arrangements will be implemented for two weeks until 6 September:

(i) the LegCo Public Complaints Office will resume its counter services from 10am to 4.30pm on Monday, Wednesday and Friday;

(ii) the LegCo Archives will resume services from 10am to 4.30pm on Monday, Wednesday and Friday, and will accept public visits by appointments. The LegCo Library will remain closed until September 13 to conduct stock-taking exercise but its enquiry services will continue to be available during the period;

(iii) Members' Entrance 2 and Footbridge Entrance of the LegCo Complex will be open from 7am to 8pm from Monday to Friday, or 30 minutes after the end of the last meeting of the day (whichever is later); and

(iv) a maximum of five members of the public will be admitted to observe each of the LegCo or its committee meeting in order to reduce the number of attendees in the public galleries of the Chamber / Conference Rooms.

For details of the epidemic prevention measures and special arrangements implemented by the LegCo Secretariat, please refer to the announcement on the LegCo Website

([https://www.legco.gov.hk/general/english/sec/corg\\_ser/whats\\_on\\_20200821-e.pdf](https://www.legco.gov.hk/general/english/sec/corg_ser/whats_on_20200821-e.pdf)).

The Secretariat will review the aforementioned measures in accordance with the development of the epidemic and make further announcements in due course.

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## Government responds to media enquiries on arrangement of COVID-19 tests by individual organisations or

# individuals

In response to media enquiries on charged COVID-19 tests offered by individual organisations or individuals in the community, a Government spokesman made the following responses and clarifications today (August 21).

The relevant tests are not arranged by relevant government departments, nor are they part of the Government's Universal Community Testing Programme (UCT Programme) or Targeted Group Testing Scheme. As the relevant testing services are not arranged by the Government, according to the "Code of Practice for Registered Medical Laboratory Technologists" promulgated by the Medical Laboratory Technologists Board, the COVID-19 nucleic acid test can only be carried out under the referral of a registered doctor or dentist, otherwise the medical laboratory technologist involved may be deemed to have contravened the Code of Practice. Further, the relevant organisations and individuals must ensure that the collection and handling of personal data complies with the requirements under the Personal Data (Privacy) Ordinance (Cap. 486).

According to the Prevention and Control of Disease Regulation (Cap. 599A), medical practitioners who have reason to suspect the existence of a case of scheduled infectious disease (including COVID-19), shall notify the Director of Health immediately. Failure to comply will constitute an offence. Further, laboratories which conduct COVID-19 tests are required to provide specimen tested positive and relevant personal information to the Public Health Laboratory Services Branch under the Department of Health for confirmation, to ensure that the infected person could be isolated and receive appropriate treatment as soon as possible, and that epidemiological investigation could be conducted.

The spokesman said, "Members of the public who feel unwell should seek medical advice as soon as possible and conduct testing if directed by the doctor. Indeed, to encourage members of the public with symptoms to conduct virus tests as soon as possible, so as to achieve early testing and diagnosis, starting from July 27, individuals who perceive themselves to have higher risk of exposure and experience mild discomfort can collect or return relevant specimen bottles free-of-charge at 22 general out-patient clinics (GOPCs) of the Hospital Authority (HA) during scheduled slots. The Government has also announced that the UCT Programme would commence on September 1 to provide a one-off free testing service for members of the public. The Government appeals to members of the public to participate in the UCT Programme with a view to fighting the epidemic together, and to contribute to the eradication and control of epidemic in Hong Kong, paving way for relaxation of social distancing measures and return to normal life."

Members of the public who intend to receive COVID-19 tests are encouraged to make use of the services provided by HA as far as possible (details of relevant GOPCs are at Annex), and the UCT Programme to be introduced by the Government which is free-of-charge. The spokesman stressed

that no personal information (including specimens and test results) will be transported outside Hong Kong, and that the workflow also does not involve the provision of any personal data to any organisations or persons outside Hong Kong.

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## CE appeals to public to fight virus together with confidence

The Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam, led six Principal Officials to hold a press conference today (August 21) to review the development of the COVID-19 epidemic situation in Hong Kong, the anti-epidemic strategy and the future work priorities of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government. She also appealed to the public to fight against the disease with concerted efforts.

Mrs Lam said, "The new wave of rapidly worsening infections since early July remains severe. The Government has never dropped its guard and has strived to prevent imported cases by reducing the cross-boundary flow of people and prevent the spread in the community by maintaining social distancing. It has also adopted the 'suppress and lift' strategy taking into account the epidemic situation.

"The stringent social distancing measures introduced recently have no doubt had an impact on the local businesses and brought inconvenience to the people. Nevertheless, the coming week is a critical juncture. I hope enterprises and members of the public exercise patience. The Government will closely observe if the emerging downward trend in the number of confirmed cases will continue and implement various types of follow-up work."

The Government's follow-up work in the coming week will include completing the virus tests and follow-up work for the clusters involving the container terminal and foreign domestic helper dormitories, reviewing the test results of the expanded targeted groups, discussing with the relevant sectors arrangements for resumption of business in an orderly manner and preparing for the launch of the large-scale Universal Community Testing Programme to provide voluntary virus tests for all citizens. Among them, the large-scale Universal Community Testing Programme is made possible with the support from the Central Government, which will be responsible for the laboratory test services required.

"The Central Government cares about and loves Hong Kong. In addition to supporting the HKSAR Government's Universal Community Testing Programme, it has also committed to the setting up of the community treatment facility at AsiaWorld-Expo and a temporary hospital nearby. On behalf of the HKSAR Government and the people of Hong Kong, I would like to express heartfelt

thanks to the Central Government for its support," Mrs Lam said.

She also said that given the anti-epidemic experience over the past eight months, Hong Kong has strengthened its capability in various areas including testing, tracing the sources of infections, quarantine facilities, treatment facilities, production of protective equipment and application of technology, and that Hong Kong is much better prepared to cope with another potential wave of the epidemic down the road. The HKSAR Government has also proactively followed up on the procurement of vaccines.

Looking ahead, Mrs Lam said that with the easing of the epidemic, the HKSAR Government will launch the work to rebuild the economy immediately, including leveraging the health code system to resume normal contact between people in Hong Kong and in the Mainland, exploring the setting up of "travel bubbles" and working in other areas such as commerce and trade, finance, innovation and technology, public works projects and the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area. The HKSAR Government will also strive to support the sectors hardest hit by the epidemic, including continuing to implement the second tranche of the Employment Support Scheme and other support programmes as well as rolling out the third round of the Anti-epidemic Fund.

"I appeal to landlords of shops, banks and large enterprises to support the small tenants and small and medium-sized enterprises to tide over the difficult times together. I also appeal to members of the public to strictly observe social distancing and personal hygiene. As long as we stay united, we will get through the epidemic very soon," Mrs Lam said.

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## Transcript of remarks of press conference

The Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam, held a press conference today (August 21). Also joining were the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Dr Law Chi-kwong; the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Mr Frank Chan Fan; the Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan; the Secretary for Development, Mr Michael Wong; the Secretary for the Civil Service, Mr Patrick Nip; and the Secretary for Innovation and Technology, Mr Alfred Sit. Following is the transcript of remarks of the press conference.

Reporter: Thank you Mrs Lam, a couple of follow-up questions. Have your scientific advisors given you, sort of, what number would be a good minimum for this community-wide testing scheme to make it worthwhile and if so few people may volunteer, do you think that the Government would consider offering sort of like an incentive, maybe a cash incentive for people to take part? And on that point about the health code, can you just definitively say that the Government will be completely ruling out that idea of a local health

code system? And Sophia Chan, just one question, on the vaccine, can you just tell us a bit more about what the Government is doing in terms of trying to acquire those vaccine and how many in total you would really want to cover Hong Kong?

Chief Executive: As far as the universal community testing, from the experts, I mean my four experts on the panel, from the very beginning, testing is regarded as very important by the experts, especially by Professor Yuen, because it is through testing that we could identify as early as possible the infected cases and then put them under isolation and treatment so that there will be no chance for the disease to spread. There is no doubt about the value of testing.

The second question, depending on the capacity of every place, you have to prioritise your testing arrangements. All along, we have been focusing on testing what we called the higher risk groups – those who have symptoms, those who are arriving from abroad, those who go to see private doctors and so on. And a month ago, we started to extend this testing because we have more capacity. We extend the testing to what we called the specified groups: staff working in elderly homes, nursing homes, and staff working in restaurants and also staff working in property management companies and transport sector and so on. If capacity continues to be a constraint, then this type of universal community testing free of charge available to asymptomatic people may not be a priority. But given the severity of this current wave and the fact that we still have 30 to 40 per cent of cases with unknown sources, which means that there is still quite a lot of, quite a number of, silent transmitters in community, the more that we could test, the earlier we could find the remaining outstanding cases. Since the Central People's Government has come forward to help us to provide this additional capacity through the additional laboratories that you have seen in one of our sports venues, through mobilising several hundreds of technicians to help us to test in order to meet the requirements of this universal community testing, we now have the ability to proceed, to do this less-a-priority testing, let's put it that way. But this is a one-off exercise. I don't envisage that we could continue to do it and it would not be very cost effective to keep on doing a universal community testing of this nature. And that's why we have not set for ourselves any targets. Our objective is to encourage as many Hong Kong people to come forward to receive this free-of-charge type of testing so that they can be assured of their own situation and they can help us and help society to recover as soon as possible. The test is free of charge. The testing arrangements will be very simple and the testing stations will be very convenient. I think those are the incentives that we have designed in rolling out this community mass testing. At the end of the day, it is the conscientiousness and the civic responsibility of every Hong Kong citizen that count, so again I repeated my appeal to the people of Hong Kong that please come forward to do this universal community testing.

As far as the health code, I notice that you use the word "local" health code and maybe that's a good way to describe it. Health code by itself is not very meaningful, as what is the purpose of the health code? The health code contains some very basic information about this individual and more

importantly about the health status of this individual, so in the case of COVID-19, the most relevant health status of this individual is whether he or she has received a test and the result is negative, and hence, he or she can travel within a limited period. The health code that we have been working on so far and had discussions with Guangdong and with Macao is for travelling. Similarly that same health code will be used for travelling to overseas countries, once we have the "travel bubble" in place with other countries. It is not a sort of health code for access to local institutions or catering or things like that. It's just not practicable to have a health code in Hong Kong for that purpose.

Secretary for Food and Health: Regarding vaccine procurement, currently there are a number of candidates having vaccine researches such as clinical trials for safety and efficacy evaluation. We know that there will be very keen global competition. Hong Kong needs to take early actions to reserve or procure potential vaccines for our population in a timely manner. In this regard, we will pursue a two-pronged strategy for procurement of vaccines. On one hand, we plan to make a binding commitment to participate in a COVAX Facility co-led by Gavi (the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunisation), the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations and also the World Health Organization. This would be a safety net to secure vaccines for about 20 per cent of the Hong Kong population. But, at the same time, we will also pursue additional supplies through the Advance Purchase Agreements with individual vaccine developers having regard to the scientific evidence and clinical data available in consultation with the scientific committee under the Department of Health. So, we will be closely monitoring the situation. The Chief Executive has also written to the Central People's Government to register our request for support when Mainland vaccines are available.

Reporter: First of all, questions about the vaccine procurement. Professor Chan, I understand that joining those alliances, actually the Government might have to pay some money in advance. So far how much money has the Hong Kong Government earmarked in the vaccine procurement and how many drug makers actually has the Government made contact with or made agreement with? I mean now there are actually more than 20 types of vaccines that have already entered human clinical trials. How many types of those vaccines the Government is aiming to procure? And secondly, regarding the universal testing scheme, so Mrs Lam, you have been urging the public to join the scheme. Would you and all the senior officials join the testing, like setting an example to encourage the public to join? Thank you.

Chief Executive: I answer your second question. Definitely. We will be the first to put ourselves through the universal community testing. I can assure you that.

Secretary for Food and Health: Regarding vaccine procurement, we found that there are a number of candidates now going through clinical trials for safety and efficacy evaluation. I think less than 10 have entered Phase 3 clinical trials. Right now, I understand that the global competition is actually ongoing. As far as the alliance, the COVAX Facility, is concerned, we have joined the COVAX so that we can obtain the latest information. As far as the

price is concerned, it is still fluctuating, so we have already reserved resources for the down payment. In this regard, we do not have to worry about resources. Regarding the Advance Purchase Agreements, because a number of Phase 3 clinical trials are still ongoing, we are now trying our best to obtain the scientific information and the latest data from them, so that those data can be assessed by our scientific committee under the Department of Health before we make decision, which hopefully would be as soon as possible.

(Please also refer to the Chinese portion of the transcript.)

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## Latest arrangements for services of HAD

â€œIn view of the latest development of the COVID-19 epidemic, the Home Affairs Department (HAD) announced today (August 21) its service arrangements from Monday (August 24). The details are set out below.

The Home Affairs Enquiry Centres (HAECs) in 18 districts will open two days a week to provide declaration and oath services for private use on a limited basis. For the opening schedule of the HAECs and hotlines for making appointments for the service, please browse the following:

[www.had.gov.hk/file\\_manager/docs/opening\\_schedule\\_of\\_HAEC\\_en.pdf](http://www.had.gov.hk/file_manager/docs/opening_schedule_of_HAEC_en.pdf). All other counter services of HAECs such as distribution of government forms and arrangement of appointment for free legal advice service will continue to be suspended.

Counter services of the Estate Beneficiaries Support Unit (EBSU) will be provided on Wednesdays and Fridays from 8.45am to 1pm and from 2pm to 6pm. Appointments for the service have to be made beforehand on a first-come-first-served basis. For making appointments, please contact the EBSU hotline 2835 1535 between 9am and 5pm, Monday to Friday (except public holidays). Walk-in requests will not be entertained.

The services provided by the Office of the Licensing Authority will return to normal. All licensing applications in connection with hotels, guesthouses and other premises as well as entertainment are encouraged to be submitted by post or using e-submission. Application forms and submission details can be found on the webpage of the Office of the Licensing Authority: [www.hadla.gov.hk](http://www.hadla.gov.hk).

All community halls and community centres, except when being used as temporary night heat shelters, will remain closed.

The â€œHAD's hotlines for persons under home quarantine will continue to operate between 9am and 6pm from Monday to Saturday. For phone numbers of the

hotlines, please visit the website of the HAD at [www.had.gov.hk/file\\_manager/docs/district\\_hotline\\_en.pdf](http://www.had.gov.hk/file_manager/docs/district_hotline_en.pdf). For other enquiries, please call the HAD's enquiry hotline at 2835 2500 between 9am and 5pm from Monday to Friday.