

Hong Kong Jockey Club Drug InfoCentre to be reopened on May 6

The Narcotics Division said today (April 29) that the Hong Kong Jockey Club Drug InfoCentre (address: Roof Floor, Low Block, Queensway Government Offices, 66 Queensway, Hong Kong) will be reopened on May 6 (Wednesday). The InfoCentre will be open from 10am to 6pm from Monday to Saturday and closed on Sunday and public holidays. Guided tours and all activities will remain suspended until further notice.

Precautionary measures will be adopted at the InfoCentre, including conducting temperature checks for visitors, advising visitors to wear their own masks before entry, and stepping up cleaning.

For enquiries, please call 2867 2831 during office hours.

Legal Aid Department to resume normal office hours next Monday

The Legal Aid Department today (April 29) announced that all of its offices will resume normal office hours on May 4 (Monday) to provide normal public services including civil and criminal legal aid application and litigation services.

Offices	Opening hours
Shroff Office	Monday to Friday 9am to 1pm and 2pm to 4.30pm
Other Offices	Monday to Thursday 8.45am to 1pm and 2pm to 5.45pm Friday 8.30am to 1pm and 2pm to 6pm

Members of the public may visit the department's website (www.lad.gov.hk) for more information or contact the department for enquiries through its 24-hour hotline (2537 7677), email (ladinfo@lad.gov.hk) or fax (2537 5948).

First batch of Hong Kong residents stranded in Pakistan to return home on chartered flight

A spokesman for the Security Bureau said today (April 29) that the first batch of around 300 Hong Kong residents stranded in Pakistan would take a chartered flight tentatively scheduled for departure from Islamabad in the morning on April 30 (local time) and expected to arrive in Hong Kong in the afternoon on April 30. The cost for taking the chartered flight is borne by the users.

Upon arrival at Hong Kong International Airport, the returnees will proceed to the Department of Health's Temporary Specimen Collection Centre at AsiaWorld-Expo by coaches for compulsory COVID-19 testing. After their deep throat saliva samples are collected, the returnees will be transferred by coaches to the quarantine centre at Chun Yeung Estate for a 14-day compulsory quarantine period.

In view of the COVID-19 pandemic situation, the Pakistan Government has banned all international flight movements since late March, resulting in Hong Kong residents stranded there being unable to return to Hong Kong through normal means for the time being. The Immigration Department (ImmD) has received requests for assistance from Hong Kong residents stranded there on their return arrangements, including the lists of assistance requests referred to the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government by chambers of commerce and non-governmental organisations that are concerned about the affected people and Legislative Councillors.

As at April 28, the ImmD had successfully contacted about 1 600 Hong Kong residents stranded in Pakistan. Due to the large number of people requesting assistance and having regard to the quarantine arrangements for the returnees and the capacities for testing and the quarantine and treatment facilities, the HKSAR Government must adopt a phased approach in assisting in the return of the affected Hong Kong residents in batches subject to the circumstances. The first batch of affected persons taking a chartered flight are those staying in Islamabad, the capital of Pakistan, and its surrounding areas, and also those with special needs such as people with illness and pregnant women. The cost for taking the chartered flight is around HK\$6,000 per person and is borne by the users.

After receiving requests for assistance from Hong Kong residents stranded in Pakistan, the Security Bureau and the ImmD have been liaising with the Office of the Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China in the HKSAR (OCMFA) and the Chinese Embassy in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan to understand the local situation and take

follow-up action, and to provide relevant information as well as practicable and appropriate assistance to the Hong Kong residents seeking help. The HKSAR Government has also been liaising with the Consulate General of Pakistan in Hong Kong, and contacting several airlines to explore arrangement of flights for the return of stranded Hong Kong residents.

The spokesman said that the chartered flight could not have been arranged smoothly without the staunch support of the OCMFA and the Chinese Embassy in Pakistan, as well as the full co-operation rendered by the Pakistan Government and the Consulate General of Pakistan in Hong Kong, for which the HKSAR Government is very grateful.

The HKSAR Government will continue to liaise with the Hong Kong residents still in Pakistan and adopt a phased approach in assisting in their return in batches subject to the circumstances.

Separately, the Government has noted that there will be a flight arriving from Doha this afternoon carrying about 170 Hong Kong residents coming back from Pakistan on their own. Upon arrival in Hong Kong, they will be subject to the same quarantine arrangement, i.e. they must proceed to the Temporary Specimen Collection Centre for collection of their deep throat saliva samples and then be admitted to the quarantine centre at Chun Yeung Estate for a 14-day compulsory quarantine period.

Apart from Pakistan, the Indian Government has also since late March banned all international flight movements. As at April 28, the ImmD had successfully contacted about 3 100 Hong Kong residents stranded in India who sought assistance on their return arrangements. The HKSAR Government is maintaining close contact with the OCMFA, the Chinese Embassy in the Republic of India and the Consulate General of India in Hong Kong, while at the same time contacting several airlines to explore arrangement of flights for the return of the stranded Hong Kong residents in batches subject to the circumstances.

The detailed arrangements such as the departure dates and location of the chartered flights are still subject to various factors, including the approval time of and the facilitation provided by the government concerned, the actual circumstances and the epidemic situation there, as well as land and air traffic or other restrictions. The Government will make an announcement as soon as the concrete arrangement is confirmed.

LCQ5: Functions of and support for District Councils

Following is a question by Dr Hon Helena Wong and a written reply by the

Secretary for Home Affairs, Mr Caspar Tsui, in the Legislative Council today (April 29):

Question:

On January 21 this year, the Kowloon City District Council (KCDC) decided to form a "Committee on Monitoring Law Enforcement of the Police". However, during the election of the Chairman and Vice Chairman for that Committee at the KCDC meeting on February 25, the District Officer (DO) of Kowloon City under the Home Affairs Department (HAD) refused to provide any support for that Committee on the grounds that the Committee's terms of reference fall outside the functions of a District Council (DC) as specified in the District Councils Ordinance (Cap. 547), and the DO left the venue together with the staff members of the DC secretariat. Regarding the functions of and support for DCs, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) given that the functions of a DC provided under section 61 of Cap. 547 include advising the Government on the following: "matters affecting the well-being of the people in the District" and "the provision and use of public facilities and services within the District", whether it has assessed if "the law enforcement in various DC Districts by the Police and the related complaints" are outside the scopes of the two aforesaid issues; if it has assessed and the outcome is in the affirmative, of the justifications for that; if the assessment outcome is in the negative, the legal justifications for the HAD's refusal to provide support for the aforesaid Committee;

(2) as the KCDC has, in accordance with the powers conferred on DCs under section 71(1) of Cap. 547, appointed the aforesaid Committee in respect of which the KCDC holds the view that the terms of reference of the Committee conform with the functions of DCs provided under section 61, while the HAD holds the opposite view, whether the Government has any established mechanism and guidelines to deal with the situation in which a DC and the HAD hold opposite views on the interpretation of Cap. 547;

(3) of the circumstances under which the HAD may refuse to provide support for DCs and their committees or attend the relevant meetings, and the specific criteria and guidelines adopted for making such decisions;

(4) whether, since the commencement of the current DC term, there have been incidents, apart from the aforesaid incident, in which the HAD refused to provide support for DCs or their committees; if so, of the (i) names of the DCs and committees involved, (ii) number of meetings concerned, (iii) types of support involved in the refusal, as well as (iv) reasons for not providing support; and

(5) whether a mechanism is currently put in place to impose punishments on those DOs who refuse, without legal justifications, to provide support for DCs and their committees; if so, of the details?

Reply:

President,

A consolidated reply to the various parts of the question is as follows:

It is specified in section 61 (Note) of the District Councils Ordinance (the Ordinance) (Cap. 547) that functions of a District Council (DC) are to, inter alia, advise the Government on district administration affairs and where funds are made available for the purpose, to promote community, recreational and cultural activities and environmental improvement projects within the district. For the purpose of carrying out its functions, a DC may appoint committees according to section 71 of the Ordinance. DCs and their committees and working groups have to conform to the relevant requirements under the Ordinance in terms of establishment, composition and functions as well as items for discussion.

When handling DC affairs (including whether an item for discussion is compatible with the DC functions specified in section 61 of the Ordinance), District Offices will, as necessary, consult the relevant departments (including the Department of Justice). After taking into consideration advice from the relevant departments, if a proposed committee/working group or item for discussion is found not compatible with the functions specified in the Ordinance, the Government will follow up accordingly, such as writing to the DC Chairman concerned about the problem and request the Chairman to follow-up and re-examine the committee's terms of reference. If the DC concerned still keeps the terms of reference or items for discussion which are not compatible with the Ordinance, the DC secretariat cannot provide secretariat service for these matters, and secretariat staff or other government officers will neither attend the relevant parts of the meeting nor join the discussion of the relevant papers.

Regarding the Committee on Monitoring Law Enforcement of the Police under the Kowloon City District Council (KCDC), the Government is of the view that its name, terms of reference and proposed work are not compatible with the DC functions specified in section 61 of the Ordinance. Furthermore, an established mechanism has already been put in place to deal with those issues in the proposed terms of reference of the Committee. Given the reasons above, the Home Affairs Department (HAD) has written to the Chairman of the KCDC to suggest the DC to re-examine the Committee's terms of reference, and pay attention to the fact that the statutory functions of a DC is to advise the Government on specific issues and that matters or items for a DC's discussion must be affairs of the respective district. As the KCDC kept those areas in the terms of reference of the Committee that are not compatible with the Ordinance, DC secretariat could not provide support to the Committee, and secretariat staff and other government officers could not attend the relevant parts of the meeting.

The HAD does not keep the breakdown of information on cases of not providing support for DCs or their committees.

Note: Functions of a District Council, as specified in section 61 of the District Councils Ordinance, are –

- (a) to advise the Government:
- (i) on matters affecting the well-being of the people in the District; and

- (ii) on the provision and use of public facilities and services within the District; and
 - (iii) on the adequacy and priorities of Government programmes for the District; and
 - (iv) on the use of public funds allocated to the District for local public works and community activities; and
- (b) where funds are made available for the purpose, to undertake:
- (i) environmental improvements within the District; and
 - (ii) the promotion of recreational and cultural activities within the District; and
 - (iii) community activities within the District.
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LCQ6: Financial support for Ocean Park Corporation

Following is a question by the Hon Yiu Si-wing and a written reply by the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Mr Edward Yau, in the Legislative Council today (April 29):

Question:

The Ocean Park Corporation (OPC) has recorded deficits of over \$200 million for successive years since the financial year of 2015-2016. The OPC is now unable to repay two commercial loans due in the last and current financial years totalling \$2.3 billion, nor will it be able to repay two government loans for which repayment should commence in the next financial year. In January this year, the Government submitted to the Panel on Economic Development of this Council a funding proposal on the financial arrangements for the OPC, which includes providing a one-off endowment of \$10.64 billion, as well as deferring the commencement date of repayment and waiving the interest of the two government loans. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) of the respective projected amounts of (i) income, (ii) expenditure and (iii) deficit of the OPC for the first half and the whole of the current financial year; for how long that the OPC's current liquidity can sustain its operation;
- (2) in view of the recent rapid deterioration of the global economic situation, whether it has plans to increase the proposed amount of the aforesaid one-off endowment; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and
- (3) whether it has drawn up fallback options in the event that the

Government's funding proposal is not approved by the Finance Committee of this Council, so as to prevent the OPC from closing down due to financial difficulties; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

In view of the COVID-19 outbreak and for the safety of the visitors and employees, the Ocean Park has been temporarily closed since January 26, 2020. Despite the drastic cost cutting measures taken by the Ocean Park Corporation (OPC) in the past two months, given the high fixed costs, the financial situation of the OPC has worsened as compared with the situation in January 2020 when the relevant item was discussed in the Legislative Council (LegCo) Panel on Economic Development. Hence, the need for Government's financial support is even more imminent.

We consulted the LegCo Panel on Economic Development on January 20, 2020 regarding the OPC's Strategic Repositioning Plan (SRP). We understand members' concerns on how the OPC would make use of the funding and the effectiveness of the SRP. We will submit the development proposal of the Ocean Park to the LegCo Finance Committee for consideration as soon as possible.