

Specimens of Universal Community Testing Programme will not be transported outside Hong Kong

A Government spokesman reiterated today (August 13) that the Universal Community Testing Programme (the Programme) would only do testing on the COVID-19 virus. All testing will be conducted in Hong Kong. Specimens will not be transported outside Hong Kong and will be destroyed after testing.

The spokesman strongly condemned the spread of online rumours suggesting specimens would be transferred outside Hong Kong. It is a deliberate act to distort facts with an attempt to smear the Programme.

Under the Programme, specimens and the registration of personal particulars will be handled separately. Privacy will not be compromised.

"No personal particulars will be indicated on the sampling bottles of the Programme. The testing agencies will know only the serial numbers but not the identity of specimen owners," the spokesman said.

"Personal data of participants who join the Programme on a voluntary basis will be encrypted and stored in the servers within the Government data centre. The data will only be available to the Department of Health or relevant departments for the purpose of disease control and be handled in accordance with the provisions of the Personal Data (Privacy) Ordinance (Cap. 486). The data will not be transferred outside Hong Kong. All personal data and testing results will be disposed of within one month after the completion of the Programme."

The spokesman also clarified that the Universal Community Testing Programme is entirely a different programme from the health code system. No health code will be issued to participants of the Programme even a negative result is obtained. It is neither a permission for free access to certain places at a certain time.

"The health code system is prepared for the purpose of facilitating boundary crossing between Guangdong, Macao and Hong Kong and has yet to be launched."

"The Universal Community Testing Programme is designed in response to public demand for universal testing over the last few months. By engaging Hong Kong citizens to join this one-time and free testing service on a voluntary basis, it is hoped that asymptomatic patients in the community can be located for early treatment and the pandemic will subside," the spokesman added.