

Government responds to media enquiries on BGI's testing services

In response to media enquiries on the test results of the Sunrise Diagnostic Centre Limited, a joint venture company of BGI in Hong Kong that provides COVID-19 testing services for the Government, the Government today (August 26) responded as follow:

The Public Health Laboratory Services Branch (PHLSB) under The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) has been designated by the World Health Organization (WHO) this year as a WHO COVID-19 Reference Laboratory and WHO COVID-19 external quality assessment programme provider. The PHLSB also provides a quality assessment programme for local laboratories.

In accordance with the existing mechanism of the DH, specimens tested with a positive COVID-19 result in all private laboratories in Hong Kong are considered preliminary positive. The specimens must be referred to the PHLSB in accordance with established procedures for confirmatory tests. After a positive result is confirmed by the PHLSB, the CHP will classify it as a confirmed case. It is the DH's established practice for all preliminary positive cases to be confirmed by the PHLSB.

Generally speaking, it is not uncommon for the PHLSB and the private laboratories to have discordant results using different platforms during the confirmatory process, and it has happened occasionally in the past. The DH may collect samples for the relevant cases again for further testing if necessary.

The Government reiterated that all private laboratories providing testing services for the Government must participate in and pass the CHP's External Quality Assessment Programme (EQAP) for COVID-19 testing so as to ensure the technical level of testing services provided.

According to the DH's record, the temporary air-inflated laboratory at Sun Yat Sen Memorial Park Sports Centre operated with the support of the Sunrise Diagnostic Centre Limited passed the PHLSB's EQAP on August 18 and the accuracy of its sample pooling method was confirmed. In addition, BGI and the Sunrise Diagnostic Centre Limited participated in and passed the EQAP for their testing facilities in June and July respectively. According to the information provided by the Sunrise Diagnostic Centre Limited, BGI's testing technology has also passed the external quality evaluation in Mainland China, Japan, the Netherlands and Malaysia etc. At this stage, there is no evidence that the quality of the testing services it provides to the Government falls short of the standard.