

LCQ3: “LeaveHomeSafe” mobile application

Following is a question by the Hon Yung Hoi-yan and a reply by the Secretary for Innovation and Technology, Mr Alfred Sit, in the Legislative Council today (January 6):

Question:

To cope with the epidemic, the Government launched the "LeaveHomeSafe" mobile application (app) on November 16 last year for members of the public to record their whereabouts by themselves through scanning a QR code. Later on, the Government required that the persons-in-charge of specified premises such as those for catering businesses must apply for a QR code of the app, and then display it at the entrance or a conspicuous position of the premises. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the number of premises at which a QR code is now displayed, with a breakdown by whether such premises belong to the public or private sector and, among the private-sector premises, the number of those which are not specified premises; in respect of each type of specified premises, the number and percentage of those at which a QR code has been displayed; the number of those premises whose persons-in-charge have been prosecuted for not displaying a QR code as required, and the penalties imposed on the convicted persons;

(2) of the up-to-date number of downloads of the app and its percentage in the population of Hong Kong; whether the response of the members of the public and persons-in-charge of private-sector premises to the app to date has met the expectation of the authorities; and

(3) whether it has reviewed, under the circumstances that members of the public are not mandated to use the app, the contribution towards combating the epidemic made by the measure of requiring specified premises to display a QR code; whether it will consider afresh requiring members of the public to use the app to scan the QR code at specified premises before they may enter them?

Reply:

President,

The Government launched the "LeaveHomeSafe" mobile app on November 16, 2020 to provide members of the public with a convenient digital tool for recording the time of their visits to different venues and taxi rides. The mobile app will notify a user if he or she is later identified to have visited the same venue that a confirmed patient has visited at about the same time or taken the same taxi that a confirmed patient (either the driver or

the passenger) has taken on the same day. In the unfortunate event of infection, the user's visit records stored in the app can assist the Department of Health's Centre for Health Protection (CHP) in epidemiological investigations and trace other close contact.

In consultation with the Food and Health Bureau, the replies to the three parts of the question are as follows:

(1) To date, over 67 000 public and private venues have participated in the scheme to display the "LeaveHomeSafe" venue QR code for members of the public to scan and record their visits, of which about 54 000 are private venues. A breakdown of the venues is at table.

In view of the development of the local epidemic, the Government on November 24, 2020 required all persons responsible for carrying on catering businesses and scheduled premises that are allowed to open (excluding bars or pubs, bathhouses, clubs or nightclubs and party rooms which are required to close under the direction) to apply for a "LeaveHomeSafe" venue QR code from the Government on or before December 2 in accordance with the directions and specifications under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Requirements and Directions) (Business and Premises) Regulation (Cap. 599F). Subsequently the Government also issued directions that except club-houses and hotels or guesthouses, all scheduled premises regulated under Cap. 599F must be closed from December 10 onwards. Club-houses, hotels or guesthouses and catering businesses are required to display the QR code poster in the prescribed dimension at the entrance to the premises or at a conspicuous position within two working days upon receipt. Persons responsible for carrying on catering businesses and managers of scheduled premises who contravene the statutory requirements under Cap. 599F commit a criminal offence and is liable to a maximum fine of \$50,000 and imprisonment for six months.

Catering businesses and other scheduled premises which are still open for business are required to display the "LeaveHomeSafe" venue QR code at a conspicuous place. The various law enforcement agencies have been deploying additional staff to step up inspections in all districts across the territory to ensure that relevant premises operators and staff comply strictly with the directions and meet the requirements and restrictions under Cap. 599F, including proper display of the "LeaveHomeSafe" venue QR code. From December 2, 2020 to January 4, 2021, the law enforcement agencies conducted over 87 000 inspections of premises regulated under Cap. 599F. In respect of the requirement to display QR code, they issued 70 and 24 verbal warnings to catering businesses and scheduled premises respectively, and initiated prosecution procedures against 18 catering business operators for failing to display the QR code appropriately.

(2) The latest number of downloads of the "LeaveHomeSafe" mobile app exceeds 430 000. Since the launch of the scheme, the number of private venues from various sectors participating in the scheme has increased from 1 000 or so at the beginning to about 54 000. We have also continuously enhanced the app having regard to the views of the public and the industry to facilitate the use by the public, including updating the access permissions required for the

app, adding new functions for reviewing personal visit records, auto check-out and simplifying steps for visiting different venues. We will continue to explore different technologies and solutions to improve user experience, and continue to invite different sectors to display the QR code and promotional poster at their venues and encourage the public to use the app. In addition, we will continue to promote and educate the public to use the "LeaveHomeSafe" mobile app through TV advertisements and promotional video clips, and solicit the public's support in using technology to record their whereabouts in order to fight the virus together.

(3) In designing the "LeaveHomeSafe" mobile app, the Government's objective is to facilitate members of the public to record more effectively and precisely the dates and times of their visits to different venues under the new normal in the fight against the epidemic, with a view to helping the public establish a habit of recording their whereabouts to minimise the risk of further transmission of the virus and enhance the public's confidence in visiting different venues. Regardless of whether those confirmed cases are using the "LeaveHomeSafe" mobile app, they are required to provide the CHP with information on the venues they visited during the infectious period. Relevant information will be released in the form of open data for the "LeaveHomeSafe" mobile app to download for comparison and sending notifications to relevant users. We will continue to promote display of the QR code in more venues and encourage users to scan and record the time of their visits so that the app can play a greater role in increasing vigilance and self-protection of the public, enhancing their confidence in visiting different venues, and assisting the CHP in epidemiological investigations.

Depending on the changes in the epidemic and expert advice, the Government will continue to explore more effective ways to deploy the "LeaveHomeSafe" mobile app and other technologies to help the public in the prevention and fight against the epidemic.

Thank you, President.

Number of venues participating in the Scheme to display the "LeaveHomeSafe" QR Code:

Public venues	
Government and public organisation buildings and facilities	About 5 600
Community facilities, e.g. sports centres, swimming pools, libraries, museums, community halls, community centres and playgrounds	About 2 600
Public works and construction sites, transportation and related facilities	About 1 100
Public rental estate blocks and related facilities	About 1 900
Education institution venues	About 900

Hospitals and clinics	About 600
Others	About 300
Total:	About 13 000

Private venues	
Food and beverage venues, e.g. restaurants, cafes, cake shops, bakery shops and food and beverage related companies	About 24 800
Non-government organisations and residential buildings	About 9 300
Stores and shopping malls	About 7 000
Sports, recreation and leisure facilities	About 4 900
Hair salons, massage establishments and beauty parlours	About 3 000
Hotels and guesthouses	About 1 500
Bank branches and financial institutions offices	About 1 400
Others	About 2 100
Total:	About 54 000