

LCQ8: "LeaveHomeSafe" mobile application

Following is a question by the Hon Wong Kwok-kin and a written reply by the Secretary for Innovation and Technology, Mr Alfred Sit, in the Legislative Council today (December 16):

Question:

To help the epidemiological tracing work in respect of the Coronavirus Disease 2019 epidemic, the Government launched, on the 16th of last month, a mobile application named "LeaveHomeSafe" (the app) for voluntary download and use by members of the public. Later on, the Government required all catering businesses and scheduled premises under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Requirements and Directions) (Business and Premises) Regulation (Cap. 599F) opening for business to apply for a "LeaveHomeSafe" venue QR code (QR code) from the Government before the 3rd of this month, and to display the QR code at a conspicuous position at the entrance of the premises within two working days upon receipt of the QR code. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) of the current number of premises issued with a QR code, as well as the number of downloads of the app; whether it has estimated the number of people who have used the app;
- (2) whether it will enhance the functions of the app, including sending automatic push notifications to users when they enter premises where a QR code has been displayed, so as to remind them to scan the QR code to record their whereabouts;
- (3) whether it will develop other tracing tools for free use by those people who do not use smartphones (e.g. the elderly and the poverty stricken); and
- (4) whether it will make download and use of the app mandatory for members of the public and introduce relevant penalties, with a view to enhancing the effectiveness of the anti-epidemic efforts?

Reply:

President:

In consultation with the Food and Health Bureau (FHB), our reply to the various parts of the question is as follows:

- (1) The Government launched the "LeaveHomeSafe" mobile app on November 16, 2020, providing a convenient digital tool for members of the public to record the time of their visits to different venues and taxi rides. After downloading the mobile app, members of the public can use the app immediately

without the need to register any personal information. The app does not have any tracking function, and venue check-in data will be encrypted and saved on users' mobile phones only. Such data will not be uploaded to the Government or any other systems, and will be erased automatically after 31 days to safeguard personal privacy of the residents. As of December 15, the app recorded more than 370 000 downloads. Since users' visit records are only stored in their own mobile phones, we do not have any statistics on the use of the app by relevant users.

As at December 15, over 64 000 public and private venues have participated in the scheme to display "LeaveHomeSafe" venue QR code for members of the public to scan and record their visits, of which about 13 000 are public venues and about 51 000 are private venues.

(2) In response to the views from the public, industry and those from different sectors of the society over the past few weeks, the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer announced the following three new functions of the "LeaveHomeSafe" mobile app on December 11 to enhance user experience:

- review of personal visit records: visit records are added to the mobile app for the user to review;
- auto check-out: apart from using the "Leave" button, the user can also choose the new auto check-out function to check out of a venue automatically at a pre-set time; and
- simplified steps for entering different venues: after scanning venue QR code, a user no longer needs to click the "Leave" button before moving to a different venue. Instead, the user can scan another venue QR code directly.

(3) Contact tracing is fundamental to the efforts in preventing further spread of the virus. The Government has been adopting multi-pronged measures in this regard, including amending the law to empower authorised officers to require a person to provide or disclose information relevant to the handling of the public health emergency, and making arrangements for public officers to be seconded to the contact tracing team, in order to strengthen the work of tracing close contacts of confirmed cases. Moreover, the FHB, together with the Innovation and Technology Bureau and other relevant departments, are developing an internal information platform specifically designed for contact tracing. The platform aims to link up various relevant departments, agencies and existing information systems for centrally and electronically collecting information needed for contact tracing, so as to streamline the procedures for information collection, input and sharing, which are mainly conducted manually at the moment. This will help speed up the Department of Health's work in tracing contacts, conducting testing and arranging quarantine or medical surveillance for such contacts.

(4) On November 24, 2020, the Government gazetted the directions and specification under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Requirements and Directions) (Business and Premises) Regulation (Cap. 599F) to require all

persons responsible for carrying on catering businesses and scheduled premises that are open must apply for a "LeaveHomeSafe" venue QR code from the Government on or before December 2, and display the QR code obtained 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 that contravene the statutory requirements under Cap. 599F would have committed a criminal offence, subject to a maximum fine of \$50,000 and imprisonment for six months.

The Government will review various epidemic control measures from time to time, having regard to the development of the epidemic situation and announce the latest arrangements as appropriate.