

Government's response to demonstration

In response to the demonstration organised by the Union for New Civil Servants (the Union) outside the Central Government Offices today (February 19), a Government spokesman made the following response:

The top priority of the Government now is to combat the novel coronavirus with all its means, and various policy initiatives have been put in place to step up anti-epidemic measures across the territory, including measures for minimising people flows and social contacts within Hong Kong. Civil servants have strict responsibility to follow the Government's policies to combat the virus and to work in concert with other sectors of the community in this regard.

At this critical moment as we combat the virus, the act of the Union to organise a demonstration by calling upon civil servants and members of the public to gather together at the expense of their safety is totally irresponsible. This is clearly contrary to the Government's important guidelines on reducing social contacts in the fight against the virus.

The Civil Service Bureau (CSB) has already provided a detailed reply in response to the concerns raised by the Union on the anti-epidemic protective equipment and special work arrangement for government employees in its letter last week.

Regarding the special work arrangement for government employees, CSB has stated clearly in its reply that bureaux/departments will make appropriate manpower arrangements and take adequate anti-epidemic protective measures according to their actual operational needs.

Regarding the Union's query on the protective equipment of the police officers on duty at Cheung Hong Estate, Tsing Yi, alleging that the protective equipment of the police officers was even better than that of the frontline medical staff, CSB has also stated clearly in its reply that the distribution of protective gear was based on the risks involved in the duties assigned. In addition, in order to allay public concerns and misunderstanding, the Government has repeatedly explained the standard of the Police's protective gear and the Government's criteria for distributing anti-epidemic protective equipment.

It is very disappointing that the Union appears to have not only ignored CSB's reply and the repeated responses given by the Government, but it has instead organised the demonstration on the pretext of the discontent about the special work arrangement and the criteria for allocating government resources. The Government deeply regrets such an attempt to divide and create conflicts among civil servants, and to undermine the morale of the civil service. Moreover, the shouting of slogan by some attending the demonstration in support of Hong Kong's independence is totally unacceptable.

At this critical moment when Hong Kong is combating the virus, the

Government hopes that the Union will adopt a positive attitude and work with the entire civil service to fight against the disease together.