

ITB thanks public support for CuMask+[TM]

The CuMask+™ online registration system had received over 720 000 registrations, covering two million registrants in total on the first day of registration on May 6.

A spokesman for the Innovation and Technology Bureau (ITB) said today (May 7) that two million registrants were recorded on the first day of registration. The response is overwhelming. It is encouraging to see support for local invention.

The spokesman said, "Our thanks go to support from all sides, including the Hong Kong Research Institute of Textiles and Apparel (HKRITA) which has been commissioned to oversee the project, the Crystal International Group Limited which is responsible for the production, the Novetex Textiles Limited in Tai Po Industrial Estate for providing clean room for sterilisation, The Mills and the TAL Apparel Limited for lending premises to set up workshops as well as the frontline workmen for their hard work over the past few months. This unrivalled challenge cannot be met without their joint efforts and the collaboration of the industry and our team."

The ITB commissioned the HKRITA to oversee the CuMask+™ project in order to meet the imminent needs for masks in Hong Kong. The Government Stores and Procurement Regulations do allow direct purchase to be made under extreme urgency. The whole procurement process was conducted in accordance with the Government's procurement regulations and procedures. The ITB had also sought legal advice and confirmed that the conditions under the Agreement on Government Procurement of the World Trade Organization could be met.

In February and March this year, the HKSAR Government contacted various suppliers of reusable masks. However, most reverted that they had either stopped production, did not have enough stock, unable to export materials due to export control, or unable to produce testing certification. The epidemic at that time was serious and the supplies of anti-epidemic items were becoming scarce. Hong Kong did not have any raw materials or production lines. Taking into account the aggressive procurement actions of anti-epidemic items by different countries, export control and suspension of production lines all over the world, the Government had to consider urgently the feasibility of manufacturing reusable masks that would be up to standard for use by the whole community.

On reviewing the reusable mask developed by the HKRITA, the Government considered that the design of the mask and materials used could meet the requirement. There were supporting certifications proving its compliance with relevant international standards. As for mass production, it depends on the availability of supply of raw materials. Having wide network in the industry, the HKRITA was able to acquire quality raw materials within a short period

and put production lines in place. The Government therefore commissioned the HKRITA to oversee the coordination of production through direct purchase with a view to supplying reusable masks to all Hong Kong residents as soon as possible.

The HKRITA is a non-profit-making R&D centre fully subsidised by the Government. Most of their R&D projects are funded by the Innovation and Technology Fund. The HKRITA oversees the CuMask+™ project on a non-profit-making basis. All expenses will be reimbursed to the HKRITA on the basis of actual spending.

Regarding some concerns over the effectiveness of the CuMask+™, members of the public may browse the website www.qmask.gov.hk/report for the testing reports and patent information.