

## LCQ7: Face masks produced by the Correctional Services Department

Following is a question by the Hon Shiu Ka-chun and a written reply by the Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury, Mr James Lau, in the Legislative Council today (March 18):

Question:

Regarding the face masks produced by the Correctional Services Department (CSD), will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of (i) the quantity of face masks produced by the CSD, and (ii) the respective quantities of such face masks supplied to the various government departments and non-governmental organisations, in each month of the past three years;

(2) of the respective quantities of face masks currently kept in the stock of the various government departments, and whether, to avoid hoarding, such departments have set a limit on the quantity of face masks kept in the stock;

(3) of the mechanism adopted by the Government for determining the quantities of face masks to be allocated to various government departments, and how such departments handle those face masks which will not be used before the expiry dates; and

(4) as the Chief Executive has indicated that the 700 000 face masks per month made available by the CSD's increased production will be given to cleansing service contractors for use by the cleaning workers hired by them, of the relevant details?

Reply:

President,

Having consulted the Correctional Services Department (CSD), the Policy Innovation and Co-ordination Office (PICO) and the Government Logistics Department (GLD), our consolidated reply to the four parts of the question raised by Hon Shiu Ka-chun is as follows:

(1) Filter masks produced by the CSD are mainly supplied to the GLD for allocation to government departments. From 2017 to 2019, the CSD supplied about 1.1 million filter masks per month on average to the GLD; the GLD supplied roughly the same quantity to government departments.

Moreover, non-governmental organisations such as social welfare agencies and schools procured about 150 000 masks per year on average from the CSD from 2017 to 2019. In the light of the developments of COVID-19, there has

been a rapid increase in the demand for filter masks from government departments. As such, the CSD has ceased to take orders from parties other than the GLD since January 2020.

(2) and (3) Based on the broad estimates, the current stock of masks at the GLD is sufficient for operational use by government departments for more than two months. In light of the developments concerning the disease, all government departments have worked very hard to reduce their demands for masks. The GLD will comply strictly with the Government's internal guidelines and accord priority to front-line staff participating in quarantine-related work, execution of quarantine orders (including medical and port health staff of the Department of Health) and maintenance of essential public services. The GLD will review the demand for and stock of masks from time to time.

Moreover, when departments manage stores items with a shelf-life (including masks), they should conduct regular monitoring to ensure that the stores will be consumed before the expiry dates. If departments are unlikely to consume the stores before expiry, they should consult other departments through the GLD to transfer the stores, where appropriate.

(4) The Government understands that outsourced cleansing service contractors have encountered difficulties in procuring masks. To protect the health of cleansing workers and maintain environmental hygiene, the Chief Executive announced on February 8 that the CSD would increase the production of an additional 700 000 masks, which would be set aside for distributing to cleansing workers engaged by outsourced cleansing service contractors as a temporary measure to relieve the imminent need.

The PICO co-ordinates the aforementioned measure of mask distribution. Starting from February 17, the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department and the Housing Department have started distributing masks to cleansing workers. Priority was given to those front-line cleansing workers who are responsible for cleaning streets, public toilets, refuse collection points, public markets and public housing estates. Each worker receives one mask per day before work. Some of the masks have also been provided to front-line cleansing workers through the Leisure and Cultural Services Department, the control points at the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge and Shenzhen Bay and the Marine Department.

The aforementioned measure is expected to benefit over 21 000 front-line cleansing workers of government contractors.