

## Multi-pronged approach to procure masks worldwide

To combat novel coronavirus infection, since January the Government Logistics Department (GLD) has resorted to all possible means and channels to make direct procurement of masks and other protective items, bypassing tendering procedures on account of the urgency. The objective is to secure such supplies as quickly as possible to meet the Government's operational requirements. As long as the items meet the technical specifications, the GLD will make immediate direct purchase. There is no question of "the lowest bid wins".

The Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury, Mr James Lau, said, "With the proactive assistance of the Economic and Trade Offices of the HKSAR Government and referrals by individuals, the GLD has got into contact with more than 400 suppliers from nearly 20 countries. To date, the department has already placed orders for over 48 million of masks, of which three million have been delivered. We hope that the remaining shipments will arrive in batches as scheduled."

Mr Lau added, "As supply of masks is very tight throughout the globe, and some jurisdictions have imposed export controls, full and timely delivery of the ordered items remains a challenge. Against this background, we have to go extra miles to source masks globally."

The GLD has a limited stock of 12 million masks at the moment (including the three million masks purchased directly and delivered) for meeting the needs of government departments and priority will be accorded to the medical and port health staff of the Department of Health, front-line staff providing direct services to the public, as well as people and working staff in quarantine centres.

The open tender issued by the GLD in late January for procurement of masks is meant to supplement the above efforts. By global open tendering, the Government seeks to expand the pool of potential suppliers for these protective gears.

Mr Lau said, "We should not give up any opportunity even though the open tender might not be very fruitful. In any case, open tender will not interfere with our efforts in direct purchases."