

SCED speaks on Local Mask Production Subsidy Scheme

Following is the transcript of remarks by the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Mr Edward Yau, on the Local Mask Production Subsidy Scheme at a media stand-up after attending the Legislative Council Finance Committee meeting today (April 17):

Reporter: Mr Yau, will the Government demand these companies not to use those titles or brandings (of the Local Mask Production Subsidy Scheme) before they actually sign the agreement (with the Government), or before they actually get the certifications to provide the masks? If there is no way for the Government to rein these companies in, is it really fair to customers? Will the authorities be at least punishing some of these?

Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development: I have mentioned from the outset that all products sold in Hong Kong, in particular surgical masks, have to fulfil (requirements under) the Trade Descriptions Ordinance and the Consumer Goods Safety Ordinance. These are the prerequisites, irrespective of whether they are produced in Hong Kong or under any schemes. They need to be subject to these consumer protection (requirements). The Customs and Excise Department has been carrying out a lot of inspections. Since late January till now, they have conducted no less than 270,000 (should be 27,000) inspections, involving 40 likely prosecutions and arrests. These are very stringent standards that everybody would need to comply with.

As for the subsidy scheme that we are running for local mask production, we impose very stringent requirements on the quality of masks produced to meet the surgical mask standard, which is ASTM Level 1 (American Society for Testing and Materials Level 1 standard). They also need to fulfill certain clean room production requirements. Only when they have produced certifications in these areas that we would formally engage them and procure (masks) from them. We are in this process. While giving some approvals-in-principle (to some applications), we also allow these successful applicants to go through this certification process to start formal production. In the meantime, I would urge any of these companies to be very cautious in promoting themselves through the scheme because there will be a lot of misunderstanding created to the consumer market. Essentially they should produce for the Government. The production under the scheme could commence only when they meet these standards.

(Please also refer to the Chinese portion of the transcript.)