

Update on anti-epidemic medical supplies from Mainland

The Commerce and Economic Development Bureau (CEDB) said today (March 15) that the task force of ensuring medical supplies has been proactively co-ordinating with various government departments and units participating in the anti-epidemic work. The task force is working closely with its Mainland counterparts to ensure that resources can be expeditiously supplied to Hong Kong to cope with the epidemic.

A spokesman for the CEDB said that with the full support from the Central Government, the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government has procured large quantities of medical supplies, including rapid antigen test (RAT) kits, proprietary Chinese medicines and personal protective equipment, which are arriving in Hong Kong in batches to cater for various anti-epidemic work. The task force has swiftly distributed the medical supplies to frontline personnel, confirmed patients and people in need through relevant government departments, the Hong Kong Community Anti-Coronavirus Link (the Link) and other local organisations, in order to fight the virus together.

To meet the imminent needs of fighting the epidemic, these medical supplies including RAT kits, anti-epidemic proprietary Chinese medicines, paracetamol, thermometers, pulse oximeters and masks, which have been procured with the co-ordination by the Central Government, are contained in tens of thousands of anti-epidemic kits distributed daily to confirmed patients so that people with urgent need would be able to receive the supplies.

The medical supplies procured with the co-ordination by the Central Government also include 86 million RAT kits received and various kinds of personal protective equipment (including over 180 million N95 masks, KN95 masks and surgical masks, as well as over 14 million articles of other protective equipment, such as protective coveralls, protective gowns, goggles, face shields, shoe covers and surgical/examination gloves). Apart from being continuously distributed to the frontline anti-epidemic personnel of the Department of Health (DH) and other government departments, the supplies have also been continuously sent to local organisations through the Home Affairs Department (HAD) for distribution to patients confirmed to have contracted COVID-19, individuals undergoing home quarantine under the "StayHomeSafe" Scheme, volunteers, persons with higher infection risks (such as residents subject to "restriction-testing declarations" or living in areas testing positive under sewage tracing), and people working in high-risk industries (such as cross-boundary goods vehicle drivers, property management staff, cleansing staff and staff of residential care homes for the elderly). Some of the suitable medical supplies have also been provided to residential care homes for the elderly through the Social Welfare Department.

The HKSAR Government expressed gratitude to the Central Government for its donation of 600 000 boxes of anti-epidemic proprietary Chinese medicines which are arriving in Hong Kong in batches. Meanwhile, those delivered to Hong Kong have all been distributed to residents subject to "restriction-testing declarations" through the Food and Health Bureau and to confirmed patients at isolation facilities and those receiving treatment at 18 Chinese medicine clinics through the Hospital Authority (HA). Among those received, 170 000 boxes have been allocated to the HAD for distribution to the community through the Link and other organisations, for the use of people in need.

The Central Government is also co-ordinating with Mainland manufacturers to speed up the supply to the Hong Kong retail market to ensure that the anti-epidemic proprietary Chinese medicines could be replenished in a timely manner. With the assistance rendered by the Central Government, the HKSAR Government will continue to procure a large quantity of anti-epidemic proprietary Chinese medicines to increase the supply in Hong Kong with a view to safeguarding the health of members of the public. Also, RTHK TV 32, as a channel dedicated for disseminating anti-epidemic information, has produced content for the public to better understand the efficacy of the anti-epidemic proprietary Chinese medicines and the points to note when taking them.

More than 1.2 million pulse oximeters have been received by the task force so far. Apart from those distributed to confirmed patients pending for admission to hospitals or isolation facilities via anti-epidemic kits as mentioned above, most of the pulse oximeters have been distributed to the HA for patient use.

Meanwhile, in collaboration with the task force of supplies from the Mainland led by the Transport and Housing Bureau, the Government has enhanced the overall transportation capacity of water and land transport, including railway transport, at a number of cross-boundary facilities. The Government Logistics Department has also set up a number of large-scale temporary storage areas (around 160 000 square metres), which has significantly increased Hong Kong's storage capacity and logistical efficiency.

The spokesman said that the task force would continue to review the situation and procure more medical supplies through its Mainland counterparts according to the needs of various government departments to fight against the epidemic.