

Update on anti-epidemic medical supplies from Mainland

The Commerce and Economic Development Bureau said today (March 20) 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.

With the full support from the Central People's 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 the various anti-epidemic work of frontline personnel. The supplies have also been distributed to underprivileged groups, confirmed patients and people in need through multiple channels including relevant government departments, the Hong Kong Community Anti-Coronavirus Link (the Link) and other local organisations.

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 People's 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 Government is also planning to distribute the medical supplies to members of the public more extensively and systematically, with a view to enhancing their anti-epidemic awareness.

So far over 130 million RAT kits procured with the co-ordination by the Central People's Government have been received. Various kinds of disinfectant products and personal protective equipment have also arrived in Hong Kong, including over 250 million N95 masks, KN95 masks and surgical masks, as well as over 23 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 and other government departments, these medical supplies have also been regularly sent to local organisations through the Home Affairs Department (HAD) for distribution to confirmed patients, 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, cleaning 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 will continue to co-ordinate with local organisations for the distribution of RAT kits through their wide community network to members of the public in various districts. RAT kits will also be delivered to confirmed patients undergoing home isolation or their close contacts under home quarantine via anti-epidemic kits.

The HKSAR Government expressed gratitude to the Central People's Government for its donation of 600 000 boxes of anti-epidemic proprietary Chinese medicines. Most of them have been distributed to residents subject to "restriction-testing declarations" through the Food and Health Bureau, and to confirmed patients in 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 use by people in need.

The Central People's Government is also co-ordinating with Mainland manufacturers to speed up supplies 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 People's 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, medicines containing paracetamol for use as analgesics and antipyretics, procured by the task force, are arriving in Hong Kong progressively. They are being allocated to the HA for patient use continuously. Some will be distributed to confirmed patients undergoing home isolation via anti-epidemic kits.

More than 1.6 million pulse oximeters have been received by the task force so far. Apart from those distributed to confirmed patients 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 (totaling around 160 000 square metres), which has significantly increased Hong Kong's storage capacity and logistical efficiency.

The task force will continue to review the situation and adjust the procurement of medical supplies according to the needs of various government departments and the public to spare no effort in fighting the epidemic with all departments and community organisations.