

# Government clarifies rumours about surgical mask supply

A Government spokesman today (February 1) solemnly clarified online rumours about the supply of surgical masks and stressed that the Government is sparing no efforts to increase the supply of surgical masks in Hong Kong.

The spokesman said that the Government is proactively increasing the overall supply of surgical masks through a multi-pronged approach. Measures include (1) sourcing globally; (2) liaising with relevant Mainland authorities to facilitate speedy clearance and delivery to the market; (3) contacting the Mainland suppliers to enhance production of surgical masks for Hong Kong; (4) increasing local production; (5) appealing to private organisations for donations.

The Government will always take the health of Hong Kong people as the first consideration, stressing that all the surgical masks produced and procured will be used to meet local demands. In particular, priorities will be given to healthcare staff and frontline officers.

Concerning a media report which said that surgical masks produced by the Correctional Services Department (CSD) were found in the community, the spokesman said that the CSD had provided surgical masks to some non-governmental organisations before the disease outbreak. It is, therefore, not unusual for people in the community to be using surgical masks produced by the CSD. Owing to keen local demand, the CSD has stopped taking orders other than from the Government Logistics Department (GLD). Surgical masks obtained by the GLD from the CSD will only be distributed to various departments in need. They will not be delivered outside Hong Kong. The Government will follow up in accordance with the law if any public officer is found to have stolen surgical masks.

On media reports about distribution of surgical masks donated by a non-governmental organisation by a political party, the spokesman said that though the Chief Executive is the honorary patron of the non-governmental organisation concerned, the surgical masks involved were not provided by the Government.

The spokesman said that the Government has announced a series of measures to minimise people from gathering and contacting. Given the tight supply of surgical masks, the spokesman appeals to members of the public to go out less and pay attention to personal hygiene to reduce the use of surgical masks.