

Effective Exchange Rate Index

The effective exchange rate index for the Hong Kong dollar on Wednesday, May 20, 2020 is 108.8 (same as yesterday's index).

LCQ3: Tackling the epidemic and related matters by the Hospital Authority

Following is a question by Dr the Hon Kwok Ka-ki and a reply by the Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan, in the Legislative Council today (May 20):

Question:

Since January this year, there have been successive confirmed cases of coronavirus disease 2019 (commonly known as "Wuhan pneumonia") imported into Hong Kong from the Mainland. In February, several thousand members of the healthcare personnel of the Hospital Authority (HA) went on strike for five consecutive days, demanding that the authorities impose a ban on the entry of all visitors into Hong Kong via the Mainland and adopt measures to reduce their risk of infection, including ensuring an adequate supply of face masks. Moreover, it has been reported that due to the tight supply of personal protective equipment (PPE), some healthcare personnel are requested to reuse their isolation gowns or temporarily keep their used face masks in paper bags for reuse. HA has also repeatedly lowered the requirements stipulated in the infection control guidelines on the protection specifications of PPE that should be used by healthcare personnel when conducting various medical procedures. Regarding HA's tackling of the epidemic and related matters, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it has assessed if HA has contravened Article 27 of the Basic Law (which stipulates that Hong Kong residents shall have the right and freedom to strike, etc.) by issuing letters to the staff members who participated in the strike asking them to explain the reasons for their absence from duty; if it has assessed and the outcome is in the affirmative, how the Government will follow up the matter so as to protect such employees' rights under the Basic Law;

(2) whether it knows the ranks of the officers who made the decisions to repeatedly lower the requirements on the protection specifications of PPE and their justifications therefor; and

(3) whether it knows the quantities of the various types of PPE currently kept by HA and the numbers of days for which the stock can last; the details about HA's procurement of each type of PPE since the epidemic outbreak, including the method, quantity, place of origin and amount of expenditure; whether the Government has supplied to HA or assisted HA in the procurement of the relevant PPE; if so, of the details?

Reply:

President,

Since the outbreak of the novel coronavirus infection, the Government has been closely monitoring the development of the situation and responding comprehensively with decisive and appropriate measures. In accordance with the Government's prevention and control strategies, we have introduced specific measures in the areas of health surveillance, compulsory quarantine, isolation treatment, health declaration, exit screening, reducing cross-boundary flow of people, enhancing "social distancing" locally, supporting various types of frontline staff and provision of protective equipment for the community. We are very grateful for the unfailing contributions from healthcare and frontline staff and will continue to accord priority to meeting their needs for protective equipment, etc.

In consultation with the Hospital Authority (HA) and the Financial Services and the Treasury Bureau, my reply to the various parts of the question raised by Dr the Hon Kwok Ka-ki is as follows:

President, I would like to clarify that our reply is made in relation to coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), not the disease in any other name.

(1) The Government and the HA always take the safeguarding of the health of the public and protection of Hong Kong's healthcare system as the top priority. In response to the industrial action from February 3 to 7, which affected public hospital services, the HA activated the Major Incident Control Centre to closely monitor the operation of public hospitals, and to deploy manpower and adjust non-emergency services with regard to service needs, with a view to focusing resources on dealing with the epidemic and maintaining emergency medical services. The Government and the HA also repeatedly urged healthcare staff participating in the industrial action to return to work as soon as possible to avoid affecting public hospital services and treatment of patients.

The HA noted that around 7 000 staff had not reported duty as scheduled on various dates during the above period. The HA will gather information from the staff concerned on their individual circumstances and consider the follow-up actions for each case in accordance with the HA's human resources policies and the Employment Ordinance (Cap. 57).

(2) The HA has been following international guidelines and expert advice in providing healthcare personnel with stringent infection control guidelines

and training in order to safeguard them from infection at work.

The Central Committee on Infectious Diseases and Emergency Response (CCIDER) of the HA is responsible for providing strategic advice on the management of infectious diseases, infection control and outbreak contingency plans. It also convenes meetings in response to international and local situations of infectious diseases so as to coordinate the relevant contingency measures. Its membership comprises representatives from the Centre for Health Protection of the Department of Health, coordinating committees and central committees of relevant specialties and Head Office of the HA, as well as the HA's experts on infection control and infectious diseases.

The HA has been closely monitoring the latest situation of the COVID-19 and making reference to international guidelines including those issued by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention of the United States. Since the HA had limited knowledge about the pathogen, characteristics and mode of transmission of the novel coronavirus infection at the onset of the outbreak, personal protection equipment (PPE) of higher specifications was used in order to prevent airborne transmission. However, as the outbreak developed, the international community has gained a better understanding of the virus and confirmed that the pathogen (SARS-CoV-2) is mainly transmitted through contacts and droplets. The CCIDER hence revised its recommendation on PPE for the HA after making reference to the latest international recommendations, clinical evidence in literature and local clinical experiences, and having regard to the global supply of PPE.

(3) As at May 15, the PPE stockpile of public hospitals includes approximately 27 million surgical masks, 3.6 million protection gowns, 5.7 million face shields and 2.3 million N95 respirators. At the current usage rate, the stockpile of various protective equipment is sufficient for use for around more than two months.

Following the swine flu pandemic in 2009, the HA reviewed its stockpile of protective equipment by making reference to the depletion of protective equipment during the pandemic period, as well as relevant information available from the WHO. The HA's stockpile of PPE has increased from 42 days to 90 days since then, with a view to building sufficient emergency stock. With the development of the COVID-19 outbreak, the HA has expedited the procurement of PPE in large quantities since January 2020 and increased the stockpiling target to six months. In addition, the HA proceeded with global procurement in late January through the flexible approach of direct purchase, with a view to procuring the appropriate protective equipment soonest possible. The Government Logistics Department has also shared information with the HA and provided it with facilitation to assist it in procuring the necessary equipment. With the Government's assistance, the protective equipment ordered earlier by the HA has arrived at Hong Kong gradually. The Government will continue to closely liaise with the HA and make the best effort to ensure that adequate protective equipment will be provided to healthcare staff for patient care.

Thank you, Mr President.

LCQ16: Arrangements for class resumption

Following is a question by the Hon Elizabeth Quat and a written reply by the Secretary for Education, Mr Kevin Yeung, in the Legislative Council today (May 20):

Question:

In view of the coronavirus disease 2019 epidemic, classes of all schools in Hong Kong have been suspended since the end of January this year. As the epidemic has subsided, the Education Bureau (EDB) has announced that classes of primary and secondary schools will resume in three phases starting from May 27. Regarding the arrangements for class resumption, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) given that while the EDB has stipulated that there should be no less than 190 school days in a school year for primary and secondary schools, classes of various schools have now been suspended for nearly four months, whether the EDB will issue clear guidelines to schools in respect of the number of school days for this school year, if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(2) given that due to the limited sizes of classrooms, it is generally difficult for schools to space out students' seats at intervals of 1.8 metres to reduce the risk of infection, of the measures put in place by the EDB to help schools resolve this problem, including whether the EDB will suggest schools to implement the arrangement under which students of each of two halves a class taking turn to go to school on alternate days, if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(3) given that upon class resumption for Primary Four to Primary Six students on June 8, there will be only about one month's time left for various schools to teach their Primary Five students face to face to prepare them for internal school examinations (and schools are required to submit the relevant results to the EDB by the end of July at the latest), and they also have to help their Primary Six students to get ready for the Pre-Secondary One Hong Kong Attainment Test scheduled for July 14, whether the EDB will consider cancelling the Test of this year to alleviate teachers' work pressure; and

(4) whether the EDB will (i) follow the practice of the Macao Government as follows: recommending kindergartens, primary schools and secondary schools to

let all their students promote to the next grade upon the end of this school year, and then adjust the teaching schedule and progress in the next year, and (ii) request schools to advance the commencement of the next school year, shorten the school holidays and reduce outside school exchange activities, so as to increase the number of school days, thereby catching up with the teaching progress delayed by the epidemic, if so, of the details, if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

My reply to the Hon Elizabeth Quat's questions is as follows:

(1) and (4) As stipulated in the Education Bureau (EDB) Circular No. 7/2005 "School Holiday List and Student Learning Time", when schools draw up the school calendar, under normal circumstances, the total number of school days for whole-day schools should not be less than 190 school days in accordance with the recommendation of the Curriculum Development Council stated in the Basic Education Curriculum Guide. However, in view of the special circumstances caused by the epidemic, schools can, taking into account their school-based requirements, flexibly adjust their school days in accordance with the learning hours and progress of students before class resumption as well as the supplementary classes arrangement after class resumption (if applicable), in order to cater for the learning needs of students and operational circumstances of schools.

In light of the outbreak of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) and to safeguard the health of students, all schools have deferred the resumption of classes since the Chinese New Year holidays. Nevertheless, during the class suspension period, schools have been adopting diversified modes of learning in order to achieve "suspending classes without suspending learning". Upon class resumption, schools will suitably adjust their teaching and learning arrangements to assist students in keeping up their learning progress, such as rescheduling school activities as well as arranging supplementary lessons for individual students before summer holiday according to their school-based circumstances and needs of parents and students. Besides, the curriculum guides for all subjects of secondary schools and primary schools are formulated by learning stages across different levels. Thus, schools can review and flexibly adapt their curriculum in accordance with the progress of their own students, for example, arranging part of its curriculum to be taught in the next school year on a need basis to facilitate the transition between different levels or learning stages.

In fact, as stated in the "Guidelines to Schools on Class Resumption" issued by the EDB on May 13, schools can flexibly arrange supplementary lessons in accordance with their school-based circumstances. Schools should act according to the best interest of students with sufficient justifications, consult representatives of teachers and parents, and inform parents of the revised summer holidays schedule and arrangement for supplementary lessons (if applicable) after obtaining approval from the

Incorporated Management Committee / School Management Committee. Hence, the EDB will not provide separate guidelines on the number of school days.

According to the School Administration Guide, a student should be promoted to the next level upon the end of each school year. The decision to ask a student to repeat for a particular level should only be made under special circumstances. Schools, have all along been exercising their professional judgements to decide whether a particular student need to repeat the current level, taking into account the circumstances of individual students and their learning needs. The EDB will provide appropriate support and professional advice to schools whenever necessary.

(2) To ensure students can learn in a healthy and safe environment, schools should put in place various measures, including maintaining appropriate social distances, frequent cleaning and disinfection of school premises, and reminding students to maintain personal hygiene, so as to properly observe health protection in a multi-pronged manner. In terms of maintaining appropriate social distances, students should keep at least one metre apart from one another when they are staying in classrooms as well as queuing up in toilets and at tuck shops. According to the actual circumstances of individual schools, various special lesson arrangements could be adopted, such as arranging students to sit in a single row with a "face-to-back" setting and requiring them to wear masks, arranging teachers to teach students who are facing one direction, and avoiding group discussion activities. Schools can make the best use of space in classrooms and different environments to maximise physical distancing and minimise close contacts among students.

(3) Under the prevailing Secondary School Places Allocation (SSPA) System, samples of the Pre-Secondary One Hong Kong Attainment Test (Pre-S1 HKAT) results are collected by the EDB biennially and the average of the two most recently sampled results is used as the scaling tool in the SSPA System. All secondary schools offering local curriculum in Hong Kong are required to arrange their S1 entrants to participate in the Pre-S1 HKAT in the sampling year; whereas in the non-sampling year, secondary schools may choose whether to conduct the Test or not. The test results can serve as reference for schools in formulating appropriate learning support plans. The EDB originally plans to implement the relevant sampling arrangements in 2020.

In light of the outbreak of COVID-19, schools have suspended classes for a few months and the upper levels of primary schools will resume classes on June 8. After consultation with the school sector, the EDB has decided to cancel the sampling arrangement for the Pre-S1 HKAT this year with a view to allowing more flexibility for schools to deal with matters relating to class resumption, as well as helping students adapt to class resumption in schools. The EDB will continue to use the average of the sampled results of the Pre-S1 HKATs in 2016 and 2018 as the scaling tool in the SSPA System for the 2021 and 2022 cycles. Since no sampling arrangement will be made this year, secondary schools can choose whether to conduct the Pre-S1 HKAT on July 14 or not according to the established practice.

LCQ2: Police manage officers' discipline and conduct and facilitate media coverage

Following is a question by the Hon Andrew Wan and a reply by the Secretary for Security, Mr John Lee, in the Legislative Council today (May 20):

Question:

Some members of the public have relayed that recently, some police officers, who had lost control of their temper when handling public events, misbehaved themselves, for instance, hurling abuses at members of the public and reporters as well as subjecting them to violence. Although the Police have indicated that the police officers involved in 21 incidents have been rebuked, those members of the public doubted the effectiveness of this course of action. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the number of police officers who were rebuked in each of the past five years and, among them, the number of those who were subsequently imposed other punishments and the details of such punishments; whether the records of having been rebuked will affect the promotion prospect and remuneration packages of police officers;

(2) as the Police have indicated that they have rebuked a traffic police officer who drove a motor cycle into a crowd back and forth in November last year, and will rebuke seven police officers who swore at a member of the public on March 8 this year, whether the Police will take actions apart from rebuking these police officers (e.g. launching criminal investigations and ordering them to apologise to the victims); and

(3) although the Police have stated time and again that they respect freedom of the press and have reminded police officers to facilitate reporters' news covering work, a number of reporters have expressed that during their news covering activities in the past eight months, police officers repeatedly hindered their news covering work and subjected them to violence, whether the Police have assessed if the Police are unable to restrain police officers from committing such acts; if they have assessed and the outcome is in the negative, whether the Police can undertake that police officers will not hinder reporters' news covering work and treat them violently?

Reply:

President,

Since early June last year, more than 1 400 protests, processions and public meetings have been staged in Hong Kong, many of which eventually turned into illegal acts. According to section 10 of the Police Force Ordinance (Cap 232), it is the statutory duty of the Police to maintain public safety and public order. When unlawful acts occur, the Police must take actions to maintain public order and safeguard the lives and properties of the public.

The Police attach great importance to the conduct and behaviour of their officers. Police officers must meet requirements on behaviour and discipline, and must uphold the Police's values in areas including impartiality and professionalism.

My reply to various parts of the question is as follows:

(1) and (2) The discipline of police officers is regulated by the Police (Discipline) Regulations. In the past five years (i.e. 2015-2019), the figures are as follows:

(i) For disciplinary offences which are minor and handled by "minor offence reports", there were a total of 362 cases or on average 72 reports per year;

(ii) a total of 235 officers, or on average 47 officers per year, were awarded punishment upon disciplinary proceedings not falling within (i) above, among them 30 were dismissed, compulsorily retired or ordered to resign; and

(iii) a total of 100 officers, or on average 20 officers per year, were awarded punishment for criminal convictions, among them 55 were dismissed, compulsorily retired or ordered to resign.

Apart from regulating officers' discipline in accordance with the Police (Discipline) Regulations (Cap 232A), the Police also manage officer's discipline and conduct through administrative measures for immediate intervention and rectification. "Rebuke" is an administrative measure and is the starting point of the penalty mechanism. Regarding certain alleged inappropriate behaviour of individual police officers, the Commissioner of Police has rebuked police officers in 22 cases. These cases mainly included the inappropriate use of force, the use of inappropriate language and inappropriate behaviour.

Rebukes made by the Commissioner of Police aim to immediately intervene in, stop and rectify the inappropriate behaviour of officers, as well as let other officers know that such behaviour is inappropriate. "Rebuke" is the starting point of the penalty mechanism. If it is found by the Police upon further investigation that other actions are required, criminal or disciplinary investigations and procedures will be undertaken. The Police will handle such cases in accordance with the established mechanism in a fair and impartial manner.

Regarding the aforementioned some 20 cases in which officers were

rebuked, the Police have undertaken disciplinary review for four of them, while the Complaints Against Police Office (CAPO) has received complaints regarding 19 of them. Given that the procedures of CAPO and the disciplinary review procedures of the Police are underway, it is not appropriate for me to comment on the details of the cases. The Police do not maintain the breakdown of statistics in relation to "rebuke" as requested in the question.

Regarding the promotion of officers, the Police will consider the overall performance of officers in appraisal and selection, including job performance, abilities, and discipline, etc. As for salaries, the Police will consider whether an officer should be given an increment in accordance with the relevant regulations of the Civil Service Bureau. Only officers whose performance (including conduct, attitude and efficiency) is considered satisfactory upon due appraisal will be recommended to be given an increment.

(3) There is a need for media practitioners to undertake reporting duties, and the Police have a duty to adopt measures to safeguard public safety and public order. In particular, this duty is a statutory one which the Police must discharge. During operations and where circumstances permit, the Police will strive to complement the reporting work of the media on the basis of mutual understanding and respect so that both sides can perform their respective functions.

During operations over the past months, the Police have from time to time encountered instances of reporter "impersonation", including fake reporter identification being seized, self-proclaimed reporters found to be not employed by the media organisation they claimed, people wearing outfits similar to those of reporters and immediate departure upon being questioned about reporter credentials. In the past, persons suspected of "impersonating" reporters engaged in acts inconsistent with the duties of reporters, and even attempted to obstruct police enforcement, participate in illegal and violent acts, and even to commit the serious offence of snatching suspects from police officers.

The Government believes that professional and bona fide reporters engaged in media work would not engage in illegal acts or intentionally obstruct police enforcement while covering events. The Police, where operations are not affected, have been facilitating reporters as far as possible. The Police have also always reminded reporters that they should also pay attention to police instructions, and maintain appropriate distance with the Police to ensure the safety of both sides.

The Police are a professional team and attach great importance to discipline and conduct. The behaviors of individual officers are subject to a rigorous disciplinary and administrative regime. Officers have their own personal responsibility and are responsible to the Police. If anyone has any complaint against police officers, CAPO will handle such in a fair and impartial manner, while the Independent Police Complaints Council (IPCC) will exercise independent and serious monitoring.

To enhance communication and explore how to foster the mutual

understanding and respect of policing and reporting work, the Commissioner of Police has invited media organisations for a meeting this week – my understanding is tomorrow. The IPCC has also made two recommendations in its report released last week, i.e. (1) review how to facilitate the work of reporters in major operations without causing undue hindrance to the Police's enforcement actions; and (2) review the need for engaging media representatives to draw up a Code of Practice allowing the Police and media to fulfill their respective duties and for ensuring the safety of all concerned. The Security Bureau will set up a task force to follow up and I will personally supervise. I believe that the media and the Police will look for a consensus on the basis of mutual respect and understanding, which will be beneficial to the work of both sides.

Thank you president.

[LCQ15: The reusable CuMask+\[TM\]](#)

Following is a question by the Hon Charles Mok and a written reply by the Secretary for Innovation and Technology, Mr Alfred Sit, in the Legislative Council today (May 20):

Question:

In February this year, the Innovation and Technology Bureau was allocated \$800 million under the Anti-epidemic Fund to subsidise the research and development (R&D) as well as the production of reusable masks (masks) for use by members of the public. In early May, the Government announced that it had earlier commissioned the Hong Kong Research Institute of Textiles and Apparel (HKRITA) to co-ordinate the production of the masks. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the details of the R&D and intellectual property rights (IPR) of the masks, including (i) the expenditure initially incurred by HKRITA on developing the relevant technology, and how much of that amount was funded by public money, (ii) the names of the holders of the relevant IPR as well as the dates and places of application for the various patents, their inventors and details of the relevant technology, (iii) whether the IPR holders have sold the relevant IPR, and (iv) apart from the aforesaid development costs, whether the Government paid any fees to HKRITA or the IPR owners or their agencies for using the relevant technology to produce the masks; if so, of the amount of the fees;

(2) of the following information on the manufacturers undertaking the various production processes of the masks: (i) their names, (ii) the locations of their production lines, (iii) the processes undertaken, and (iv) the expenditures (if any) on acquiring production machinery and equipment for

undertaking the relevant processes, as well as the manpower employed and the expenditures incurred for such purpose; given that the Government did not conduct any open tender exercise for the production of the masks, of the criteria adopted by the Government for selecting those manufacturers;

(3) as it has been reported that the manufacturing and transportation costs involved in producing 9 million masks have reached \$360 million, of the details of a breakdown of such costs;

(4) of the schedule for the production processes of the masks (including the dates of finalising the technology to be used in the production of the masks, completing the various R&D projects and commissioning manufacturers to undertake the production work); as the Secretary for Innovation and Technology (the Secretary) has advised that the Government decided in February this year to directly award the contract for production of the masks to Crystal International Group Limited, of the reasons why the Government did not disclose the relevant details when responding to the questions raised by some Members at the relevant meetings of the Finance Committee of this Council;

(5) of the amount of expenditure incurred so far in respect of the R&D and production of the masks and the estimated total expenditure;

(6) as the website set up by the Government for the masks indicates that the design of the mask was awarded a Gold Medal at the International Exhibition of Inventions of Geneva 2018, and the website of HKRITA indicates that the award-winning technology "embed[s] a magnetic field in a face mask in order to provide effective filtration ... by changing the direction of movement of nature-charged PMs and micro-organisms", whether this technology has been used in the masks distributed by the Government;

(7) given that a testing report (No. TXB2386/2016/SP) issued by SGS Taiwan Ltd. in 2016 was originally provided on the website of the masks, of the reasons why subsequently another testing report (No. TXB1688/2018/SP) issued by the said company in 2018 is instead provided on the website, and how these two reports explain the functions of the masks respectively;

(8) whether the testing data published by the Government represent the results of tests conducted separately on the six layers of functional materials and on the copper filter of the masks; whether it has conducted tests on how the fact that the masks comprising six layers of materials has affected the functions of the masks in terms of pressure resistance and physical/magnetic filtration capability; if so, of the details; given the Secretary's remarks that "the CuMask+™ is an improved version of the award-winning design", of the details of the technical improvements made to the masks;

(9) as the Government has claimed that the masks, after 60 washes and uses, can still meet ASTM F2100 Level 1 protective standard, but some parts of the testing reports published on the aforesaid website have been redacted, whether the Government will release more information on the tests concerned

or citing the data of other tests (e.g. the AATCC TM 100 tests conducted in the United States), so as to address the doubts of members of the public;

(10) of the name(s) of the supplier(s) of the mask filters and the unit cost of the filters; whether members of the public will be provided with replacement filters by the Government free of charge in future, or need to purchase the filters on their own; and

(11) as paragraph 4 under "Purpose of information collection" on the registration webpage for the masks indicates that "for the purposes stated in paragraph 1 above, or with your consent, or where disclosure is authorised or required by the law, personal data in this registration may be disclosed to the relevant government bureaux/departments/organisations", of a list of the government bureaux/departments/organisations involved?

Reply:

President,

The Government is handing out the CuMask+™ to Hong Kong residents for free, using local research and development results to help the community fight against the epidemic.

Having consulted the Hong Kong Research Institute of Textiles and Apparel (HKRITA), our reply to the different parts of the question is set out below:

(1) The HKRITA was granted funding under the Innovation and Technology Fund (ITF) in 2017 to conduct research on washable and reusable masks. The project commenced in March 2017 and was completed in January 2019. The total project cost was \$1.5 million, of which around \$1.28 million was funded under the ITF and the remainder was sponsored by the industry. Apart from the above-mentioned research expenditure, the Government has not made any payment to the HKRITA or its agents for the use of the relevant technologies for production of masks.

The HKRITA applied for patents in China and the United States (US) in January 2018. The inventors are Dr Yao Lei, Dr Liao Xiao, Dr Wang Yongli and Ms Lin Siyu. They were the employees of the HKRITA during the conduct of the research project. The HKRITA owns the intellectual property and the relevant patented technology is 'Method and facemask for decreasing the microorganism to be inhaled and the use and manufacturing method of the same'.

The HKRITA subsequently improved the technologies adopted for the mask, and applied for a US patent in respect of the technology of the CuMask+™ in March 2020. The relevant patented technology is 'Washable and reusable anti-microbial face mask'. The inventors are the Chief Executive Officer of the HKRITA, Professor Edwin Keh, and the Director, Research and Development of the HKRITA, Dr Ray Cheung. The HKRITA has not sold any of the above-mentioned intellectual properties.

(2) The Innovation and Technology Commission (ITC) under the Innovation and Technology Bureau (ITB) commissioned the HKRITA to co-ordinate the CuMask+™ project, with the HKRITA responsible for sourcing raw materials as well as co-ordinating production, sterilisation and packaging processes, etc.

The Government's Stores and Procurement Regulations allow direct purchase to be made under extreme urgency. The whole procurement process was conducted in accordance with the Government's procurement regulations and procedures, and the approval of the Financial Services and the Treasury Bureau had been obtained. The ITC has also sought legal advice, and confirmed that the conditions under the Agreement on Government Procurement of the World Trade Organisation could be met.

The HKRITA is responsible for sourcing suitable raw material suppliers and making production arrangements. Based on the information provided by the HKRITA, the raw material suppliers are Action Nonwovens Company Limited, Argaman Technologies Limited, Esquel Enterprises Limited, and Y and K Textiles Limited.

The masks were produced in Hong Kong and Vietnam, with the Crystal International Group Limited responsible for the major part of production; the Novetex Textiles Limited providing venue for setting up clean room for sterilisation; The Mills and the TAL Apparel Limited lending premises to set up workshops for sample development, improvement and testing, studying the production flow, staff training, using the right material pattern to reduce raw material consumption, and small batch production; the Kerry Logistics and Hongkong Post responsible for logistics and delivery.

(3) and (5) According to the latest estimate, taking into account the costs of raw materials, production, packaging, freight, logistics, manpower and delivery, etc, the cost of each mask is around \$40. As the production, logistics and delivery work, etc, has not yet been completed, we do not have the final expenditure figure at the moment.

We have requested the HKRITA to submit to the Government a report and audited accounts for the entire project. We anticipate that we can make public the report and audited accounts this August. The amount payable to the HKRITA would be based on the actual expenditure where excess amount that has been paid to the HKRITA would be returned to the Government.

(4) Since late January this year, COVID-19 has started to spread rapidly. At that time, different places started to experience an acute shortage of disposable masks in the market. To help the public fight against the epidemic, the ITB started to contact various suppliers of reusable masks at that time so as to assess the feasibility of procuring reusable masks. However, most reverted that they had either stopped production, did not have enough stock, were unable to export materials due to export control or unable to provide testing certification, etc.

At that time, the ITB had reviewed the reusable mask developed by the HKRITA earlier, and considered that there were testing certifications proving its compliance with relevant international standards. The ITB therefore

studied the feasibility of arranging direct manufacturing of sufficient reusable masks that would be up to standard for use by the community at the same time.

By mid February, the HKRITA was able to obtain raw materials for making a certain quantity of reusable masks, and was proactively looking for local production line. However, the HKRITA did not have the cash flow to purchase the materials. The ITC therefore made use of the internal resources of the Government to commission the HKRITA to co-ordinate the production of 2 million adult masks through direct engagement, so as to enable the HKRITA to procure the relevant materials from the market in time.

Given the acute shortage in the supply of raw materials at that time, coupled with export controls imposed by many places, the HKRITA could not secure sufficient raw materials. The ITB therefore continued to identify other manufacturers in the market which could supply reusable masks. At the same time, in the paper approved by the Legislative Council Finance Committee seeking funding approval of the Anti-epidemic Fund on February 21, it was stated clearly that the \$800 million reserved thereunder is for consideration of different technology applications relating to reusable masks, such as the production of reusable masks, etc.

As all raw materials had to be imported into Hong Kong from other places, we have not disclosed the names of the raw material suppliers of the HKRITA at that time for fear that the raw materials might be subject to sudden export controls or aggressive procurement actions from other buyers at high prices.

Until April, as the HKRITA had secured raw materials that were sufficient for the manufacturing of at least 9 million masks and the production line in Vietnam had started mass production, the ITB confirmed to ask the HKRITA to co-ordinate the production of all reusable masks.

(6) and (8) The mask which won a gold medal in the International Exhibition of Inventions of Geneva 2018 adopted a six-layer design with anti-bacterial materials containing micro-copper, filtration layer, supportive layer and the application of magnetic field. Afterwards, the HKRITA continued the research, and considered that the function of the magnetic field was not sustainable and the mask was only effective for 20 washes. Instead, the use of functional materials in the filtration layer and supportive layer could not only offer protection but also withstand multiple washes. Therefore, the CuMask+™ adopts an improved design and has not applied magnetic field, whilst continuing to use the six-layer structure and ergonomic design and improving the use of materials to achieve the result of being effective for 60 washes. The organiser of the International Exhibition of Inventions of Geneva also wrote to congratulate the HKRITA on commercialisation of the award-winning design to help Hong Kong people fight against the epidemic.

We have released the testing results of the CuMask+™ under the conditions of pre-wash, after 40 washes and after 60 washes, and the anti-microbial testing results of the anti-bacterial layer containing copper. The

Differential Pressure of the mask is shown in the test reports, while the filtration performance is reflected by Particle Filtration Efficiency and Bacterial Filtration Efficiency. These functions have attained ASTM F2100 Level 1 standard. There is a slight decline in the performances of Particle Filtration Efficiency and Differential Pressure after 60 washes, and the filter should then be changed.

(7) The two anti-viral test reports uploaded onto the Government's CuMask+™i,® website were conducted by a laboratory at the commission of the HKRITA in 2016 and 2018 for the ITF-funded project of 'Development of a Reusable and Comfort Facemask as a Barrier to Microorganisms' as mentioned in (1) and its preliminary work.

The materials tested in the reports were provided by the same supplier adopting the same technology, and are similar to the anti-bacterial layer used in the CuMask+™i,® filter. The two anti-viral test reports can be used as the reference for the anti-bacterial layer of the CuMask+™i,®. The HKRITA indicated that they had tried to approach a number of laboratories in February to April to conduct anti-viral tests on the CuMask+™i,® but all laboratories had suspended tests related to viruses because of the epidemic.

On the other hand, we have also uploaded the anti-bacterial reports of the materials containing copper used in the CuMask+™i,®. Both materials passed the test.

(9) The information masked is the names of the raw material suppliers and commodity numbers. The original intention was to respect the will of individual suppliers, protect the supply of raw materials and avoid promoting any particular commodity. To address public concerns, the HKRITA has subsequently made public the names of the suppliers.

(10) Depending on the development of the epidemic and the supply of raw materials, the Government may consider distributing replacement filters to the public. In future, if the Government distributes anti-epidemic items again under the reusable mask project, including filters, the Government will make the procurement through open tender.

(11) As regards protection of personal data, relevant departments have been complying with the regulations under the Personal Data (Privacy) Ordinance, and have consulted the Privacy Commissioner for Personal Data. The Government will not use the information provided by citizens in obtaining the masks for purposes irrelevant to the distribution of masks. The Government will also ensure that the retention period of the personal data is not longer than the time required for the purposes for which the data is used.

The Government will disclose the personal data collected in the registration to departments or organisations related to the distribution of mask, only with the consent of the data subject, or where disclosure is authorised or required by the law. These departments or organisations include the ITC, which is responsible for co-ordinating production and distribution and handling complaints; the Office of the Government Chief Information

Officer, which is responsible for developing the registration system and conducting procedures related to the system; the Efficiency Office, which is responsible for handling public enquiries; as well as Kerry Logistics and Hongkong Post, which are responsible for logistics and delivery, etc.