

DH welcomes WHO Regional Director for Western Pacific and showcases contributions of Hong Kong, China to global public health, Chinese Medicine development and tobacco control (with photos)

The World Health Organization (WHO) Regional Director for the Western Pacific, Dr Saia Ma'u Piukala, visited the Department of Health (DH) today (March 11) to gain insights into its pioneering efforts in advancing global public health, prevention and control of infectious diseases, traditional Chinese Medicine development and effective implementation of tobacco control strategies.

This visit marks Dr Saia Ma'u Piukala's first trip to Hong Kong since his appointment by the WHO last year. During the meeting, the Director of Health, Dr Ronald Lam, gave an overview of the DH's extensive services, covering disease prevention and control, health regulation, health promotion, dental, rehabilitation and specialised health services. The Controller of Regulatory Affairs of the DH, Dr Amy Chiu, highlighted Hong Kong's commitment and proactive tobacco control strategies, especially the imposition of a ban on alternative smoking products, which can effectively prevent their use in the territory. The Controller of the Centre for Health Protection of the DH, Dr Edwin Tsui, also outlined the response measures implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic and shared experiences on prevention and control as well as future plans. The DH also engaged in discussions with Dr Saia Ma'u Piukala to enhance collaborative efforts in the prevention and control of various infectious diseases, including influenza, AIDS, and viral hepatitis.

Dr Saia Ma'u Piukala applauded the measures and commended Hong Kong for the DH's active participation and contributions to the prevention and control of various diseases and global health governance.

"We are looking forward to stronger collaboration with the DH. Together, for the sake of the young generation and the world, we hold the power to make a difference," said Dr Saia Ma'u Piukala.

Dr Saia Ma'u Piukala was then accompanied by the Head of the Tobacco and Alcohol Control Office (TACO), Dr Fung Ying, to a statutory no smoking area in Admiralty to inspect the enforcement work of the staff of TACO of the DH. He was also briefed on the tobacco control policy and the way forward to control smoking in Hong Kong.

In the afternoon, Dr Saia Ma'u Piukala went to the Government Chinese

Medicines Testing Institute (GCMTI) of the DH and was briefed by the Assistant Director (Chinese Medicine), Dr Edmund Fong, on the work of the GCMTI as well as the DH's efforts in promoting the development of the Chinese medicine locally and internationally, including the development of standards for Chinese herbal medicines, and new identification and testing skills and methods for Chinese medicines to add momentum to the modernisation and standardisation of Chinese medicine.

DH staff then accompanied Dr Saia Ma'u Piukala to visit the Harlech walking trail on the Peak to appreciate the wild medicinal plants there, including *pavettahongkongensis* bremek, *cibotiumbarometz* (L) J Sm, and *figus hirta* vahl, which are recorded in a publication called "Hong Kong Characteristic Medicinal Plants" published by the DH.

"The DH is committed to advancing global health initiatives and overcoming public health challenges in collaboration with the WHO. Our designation as the WHO Collaborating Centre for Traditional Medicine and the WHO Collaborating Centre for Smoking Cessation and Treatment of Tobacco Dependence demonstrates our dedication to enhancing human health and well-being. Furthermore, the WHO has designated the Public Health Laboratory Services Branch of the Centre for Health Protection of the DH as reference laboratories for various communicable diseases, making significant contributions to fighting epidemics worldwide. We will continue to strengthen our work with the WHO and other WPRO member states, and embrace our role as a 'super-connector' bridging Mainland and global health partners," said Dr Lam.

Dr Saia Ma'u Piukala met with the Secretary for Health, Professor Lo Chung-mau, yesterday (March 10). During their stay in Hong Kong, the DH also arranged for the WHO delegation to meet with other representatives of the public health sector.

