

# Government conducts drill for Pilot Scheme for Direct Cross-boundary Ambulance Transfer in GBA smoothly today (with photos)

The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government conducted today (August 23) a drill for the Pilot Scheme for Direct Cross-boundary Ambulance Transfer in the Greater Bay Area (Pilot Scheme) in collaboration with the Guangdong Provincial Government and the Shenzhen Municipal Government. The drill, which simulated the transfer of patients under the cross-boundary ambulance arrangement, was conducted smoothly in general. The HKSAR Government will review the drill arrangement with the relevant Mainland authorities, with a view to launching the Pilot Scheme within this year.

Today's drill mainly aimed at testing the routing of the cross-boundary ambulance between the University of Hong Kong – Shenzhen Hospital (HKU-SZH) and the designated hospitals in Hong Kong (Tuen Mun Hospital and Hong Kong Children's Hospital), as well as the immigration arrangements of the ambulance to and from Hong Kong. After departure from HKU-SZH this morning, the designated Shenzhen cross-boundary ambulance travelled to Tuen Mun Hospital via Shenzhen Bay Port and subsequently headed to Hong Kong Children's Hospital, before returning to HKU-SZH via Shenzhen Bay Port. The process was generally smooth. Upon reviewing today's drill arrangement, the HKSAR Government may conduct another drill with the relevant Mainland authorities if necessary with the aim of launching the one-year Pilot Scheme within this year.

The Secretary for Health, Professor Lo Chung-mau, said, "At present, there is no direct cross-boundary ambulance arrangement for transfer of patients by land between Hong Kong and the Mainland as well as Macao. The handover of patients can only be conducted at boundary control points under the 'vehicle-to-vehicle' mode. However, such a 'vehicle-to-vehicle' mode may pose medical risks to certain patients with special medical needs. With the further integration of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA) and more frequent travelling of residents within the GBA, the HKSAR Government is determined to rationalise the relevant cross-boundary transfer arrangement which has been an issue of public concern for years. I am glad that Guangdong and Hong Kong took the lead in conducting a successful drill today through the concerted efforts of the HKSAR Government, the Guangdong Provincial Government and the Shenzhen Municipal Government to gear up for the official launch of the Pilot Scheme."

The Chief Executive announced in the 2023 Policy Address the exploration of a cross-boundary ambulance transfer arrangement in the GBA. The Pilot Scheme will first roll out the arrangement of direct ambulance transfer of patients from designated hospitals in Shenzhen and Macao to designated public

hospitals in Hong Kong. The Government published in the Gazette on August 16 the exemption of designated Shenzhen cross-boundary ambulances from the Road Traffic (Registration and Licensing of Vehicles) Regulations (Cap. 374E) (the Regulations) during a specified period, pursuant to regulation 3(c) of the Regulations so as to facilitate the drill arrangement. The Governments of the two places will strive to finalise as soon as possible the long-term arrangements for designated Shenzhen cross-boundary ambulances to enter Hong Kong.

Apart from the entry arrangement of vehicles into Hong Kong, the Health Bureau is also in discussion with the relevant departments of the Guangdong Provincial Government and the Shenzhen Municipal Government on the implementation details regarding the entry of medical items and personnel on the ambulance into Hong Kong. In particular, HKU-SZH will deploy healthcare personnel to escort patients with clinical needs on the ambulance to a designated public hospital in Hong Kong. The HKSAR Government will ensure compliance by the doctors concerned with the relevant laws of Hong Kong, such that they can continue to carry out the necessary medical procedures for the patients on board the ambulance upon entry into Hong Kong. The Medical Council of Hong Kong has issued a promulgation regarding limited registration in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Medical Registration Ordinance (Cap. 161). The Hospital Authority (HA) is making limited registration applications for the Mainland doctors who will provide support aboard the cross-boundary ambulances.

Meanwhile, the HKSAR Government is also in discussion with the Macao Special Administrative Region Government on the relevant drill arrangement. The cross-boundary ambulance mechanism will only be activated when a prior agreement between the sending hospital (i.e. HKU-SZH or the Conde S. Januario Hospital of Macao) and the receiving hospital (i.e. designated public hospitals under the HA of Hong Kong) has been reached in advance, with the medical needs, safety and interests of patients as the prime concerns while avoiding abuse of the mechanism. Subject to the effectiveness and operational experience of the Pilot Scheme, relevant government departments will consider whether and how to expand the Scheme, such as including more designated hospitals and/or extending the Pilot Scheme to a two-way arrangement.





