

## LCQ5: Construction of a new acute hospital

Following is a question by the Hon Yang Wing-kit and a reply by the Acting Secretary for Health, Dr Libby Lee, in the Legislative Council today (May 28):

Question:

In the reply to my question raised when examining the Estimates of Expenditure 2025-2026, the Government has indicated that in further planning for the Second Hospital Development Plan, the redevelopment or expansion of existing hospitals and the construction of new hospitals to meet demand, including the feasibility of identifying a site for construction of a new acute hospital in Wong Tai Sin, will be options considered by the authorities. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the latest progress in identifying a site for construction of a new acute hospital in Wong Tai Sin; whether it has studied the feasibility of the establishment of an acute hospital, in the form of a cluster of hospital buildings, in the context of the expansion of the Tung Wah Group of Hospitals Wong Tai Sin Hospital, the vacant land made available after the relocation of the Diamond Hill Service Reservoirs, together with Our Lady of Maryknoll Hospital; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(2) whether it has studied the feasibility of construction of an acute hospital at other sites (including the recreation ground at Heng Lam Street, Lok Fu); if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(3) as it is learnt that there is a shortage of healthcare manpower in Hong Kong, whether the Government has assessed the time frame for having sufficient healthcare manpower to meet the needs of a new acute hospital, and whether it will expedite the introduction of non-locally trained healthcare personnel?

Reply:

President,

Having consulted the Hospital Authority (HA), the consolidated reply to the question raised by the Hon Yang Wing-kit is as follows:

(1) and (2) The HA plans and develops various public healthcare services on a cluster basis, taking into account a number of factors, including the increase in service demand as a result of population growth and demographic changes, rising prevalence of chronic diseases, technology advancement, manpower availability as well as service arrangement of the clusters.

At present, Wong Tai Sin is within the catchment area of the Kowloon Central Cluster (KCC). There are nine hospitals/healthcare institutions in the KCC providing healthcare services to the residents of the district, including the Queen Elizabeth Hospital (QEH) and the Kwong Wah Hospital (KWH) which are both equipped with Accident and Emergency (A&E) departments. In future, A&E services for the district will be provided by the New Acute Hospital at the Kai Tak Development Area (NAH) and the KWH. A service network with other extended care hospitals in the cluster will be formed to provide comprehensive healthcare services continuously to the catchment population of the KCC, including the residents of Wong Tai Sin.

In view of the healthcare services demand of Kowloon region, the HA commenced the refurbishment project of Hong Kong Buddhist Hospital in 2015 and completed all works in 2019, which provided 130 additional convalescence and rehabilitation inpatient beds as well as other medical facilities. The HA is also implementing various hospital development projects in the three Kowloon clusters under the First Hospital Development Plan (HDP). Among the projects, the new Phase 1 Building of the redevelopment project of the KWH was completed at the end of 2022, providing a construction floor area of about 145 000 square metres. As compared to the old KWH, four operating theatres, one cardiac catheterisation room, four endoscopy rooms, one magnetic resonance imaging room and a one-stop ambulatory care centre are provided additionally. For the new A&E department, which is approximately three times the size of the old one, it has an additional Emergency Medicine Ward with 40 beds, isolation areas for infection control and other supporting facilities. With the commissioning of the new A&E department, the average waiting time for patients who, after treatment at the A&E department of the KWH, need to wait before being admitted to the hospital has dropped by about 24 per cent in the third and fourth quarters of 2024 as compared with the same period in 2023. In addition, the NAH will replace the role of the QEH as an acute hospital upon completion and provide 2 400 beds and 37 operating theatres, which are more than the existing about 1 940 acute and extended care beds and 24 operating theatres in the QEH. The gross floor area of the A&E department of the NAH is about thrice the current area of that of the QEH.

When planning A&E services, the HA will ensure that the A&E department is located within a reasonable distance from its catchment areas. For example, after the commissioning of the NAH, the driving distance and time from major housing estates in Wong Tai Sin District to the NAH will be shorter than for those to the QEH currently.

The Government announced in 2018 that it has invited the HA to commence planning for the Second HDP, which was to be implemented to meet the service demand up to 2036. With the changes in the planning and development situation in Hong Kong, for example, its territory-wide and regional planning and development strategies, the latest corresponding change in population projections, etc., the Health Bureau and the HA are currently reviewing the Second HDP by adopting a planning horizon of up to 2041 and beyond, and to project the healthcare services demand and consider the supply and conditions of the land required (including the feasibility of constructing a hospital

and the associated supporting facilities on the site concerned), for optimising the Second HDP. The Government also considers factors such as the construction and development need of individual hospitals and its cost-effectiveness, and the convenience of public access to healthcare services under various major transport infrastructure development plans for determining the distribution, scale and priority, etc. of various hospital development projects under the Second HDP. As for the Second HDP, we would prudently consider various factors including whether to continue with the redevelopment or expansion of the existing hospital(s) in Kowloon, or to construct new hospital(s) for meeting the demand of healthcare services. The consideration of building a new acute hospital in Wong Tai Sin is subject to the availability of suitable site(s) and feasibility study(ies).

After the completion of the review of the Second HDP, the Government will announce the details of the hospital development projects, including those in the Kowloon region, in due course.

(3) In the course of planning and implementing the HDPs, the HA will forecast future service demand and corresponding healthcare manpower requirements and make corresponding assessments and planning, with a view to flexibly deploying manpower and recruiting additional staff in a timely manner according to service plans during the commissioning of new hospital facilities and phased introduction of services to meet service demands. The HA will also make good use of the revised legal framework to attract non-locally trained healthcare talent from different regions to work in Hong Kong, thereby expanding the talent pool of Hong Kong's public healthcare system to meet the increasing service demands.

Regarding the overall healthcare manpower of Hong Kong, the Government conducts a healthcare manpower projection exercise every three years to update, on a regular basis, the supply and demand figures of the 13 healthcare professionals which are subject to statutory registration, in step with the triennial planning cycle of the University Grants Committee, which provides an important reference for the Government to determine the training quotas for various healthcare professions. The results of the last round of Healthcare Manpower Projection 2023 were announced in July 2024 and a new round of the projection exercise has also commenced. As put forward explicitly in the Chief Executive's 2024 Policy Address, the Government will promote the use of the legislation passed earlier to proactively admit more non-*local* doctors and nurses, etc. to enhance manpower. The Government has also introduced bill to the Legislative Council to make amendments to the relevant legislation on the admission of qualified non-*locally* trained supplementary medical professionals.

Thank you, President.