

Opening Ceremony of Hospital Authority Hong Kong Breast Milk Bank held (with photos)

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

The Hospital Authority (HA) Hong Kong Breast Milk Bank (HKBMB) held its opening ceremony today (June 16), marking a milestone in neonatal care and demonstrating the joint commitment of the Government, the HA and the community to protect the most vulnerable lives and give them a healthy start in life.

The ceremony was officiated by the Secretary for Health, Professor Lo Chung-mau. Other distinguished guests included the Under Secretary for Health, Dr Libby Lee; the Director of Health, Dr Ronald Lam; the Chairman of the HA, Mr Henry Fan; and the Chief Executive of the HA, Dr Tony Ko.

In his address, Professor Lo said, "The Chief Executive's 2023 Policy Address proposed the establishment of a breast milk bank and a donation mechanism to benefit premature and critically ill newborns. After over a year of effort, the HKBMB began operations in early January this year. In just six months, more than 230 mothers have registered as breast milk donors, providing a precious gift to newborns in clinical need. I sincerely thank all the mothers who selflessly donated their breast milk and encourage citizens to support breastfeeding and motivate more mothers to join the breast milk donation. The Government has been dedicated to promoting breastfeeding, and currently, there are eight public hospitals with obstetrics and gynaecology departments and one private hospital certified as Baby Friendly Hospitals. Additionally, 15 Maternal and Child Health Centres (MCHCs) have been certified as Baby Friendly Health Facility. The Government and frontline healthcare teams will continue to work tirelessly to promote breastfeeding and breast milk donation."

Mr Fan said, "Currently, more than 230 mothers have successfully registered as donors, donating a total of over 900 litres of breast milk, benefiting 120 infants. The results have far exceeded expectations." He thanked the obstetric and paediatric healthcare staff of public hospitals, the MCHCs of the Department of Health (DH), private hospitals and breastfeeding advocacy groups for their tireless efforts in promoting to and recruiting donors. The success of the HKBMB is truly a collective achievement.

Breast milk donors and parents of recipient infants were invited to the opening ceremony to share their journeys on stage. A donor identified as Yoyo expressed that every life is worth cherishing and described donating breast milk together with her daughter as life-saving and meaningful. Another donor, identified as Fuk, said the establishment of the HKBMB ensures that every drop of mother's milk is put to good use by helping babies in need. Together,

they encouraged recipient families, "We hope to be a support for families of premature babies and to safeguard the healthy growth of the next generation."

Meanwhile, Mr and Mrs Tong's premature twin daughters were admitted to the neonatal intensive care unit right after birth. After learning from healthcare staff about the benefits of breast milk for premature infants and the rigorous operation of the HKBMB, they decided to give their daughters donor breast milk while Mrs Tong also worked hard to pump more breast milk herself. Eventually, the twins recovered and were discharged. Mrs Tong was able to produce enough breast milk to feed her children.

Mrs Tong said, "Donor breast milk greatly alleviated my anxiety as a new mother at that time. I feel very fortunate to have access to this new service. Donor mothers are so loving, spending time and effort to pump milk so that babies can benefit. I am truly grateful for their contribution."

The HKBMB began operations in early January this year, and started recruiting donors and collecting milk. By the end of March, it was supplying breast milk to all neonatal intensive care units in nine public hospitals across Hong Kong for infants with clinical needs.

The HKBMB has set up a breast milk donor service centre on the ground floor lobby of Tower B of Hong Kong Children's Hospital, providing information, counselling and breastfeeding support. Members of the public can also visit the HKBMB website (www.ha.org.hk/hkch/hkbmb) for more information and register as breast milk donors. There are also related leaflets available in obstetrics and gynaecology and paediatrics departments in public hospitals, as well as MCHCs under the DH.

