

Secretary for Health continues visit to Beijing (with photos)

The Secretary for Health, Professor Lo Chung-mau, and his delegation continued their visit to Beijing today (November 7), calling on the Director of the Hong Kong and Macao Affairs Office of the State Council, Mr Xia Baolong, and visiting the National Administration of Traditional Chinese Medicine (NATCM) and the Beijing Municipal Health Commission.

Professor Lo introduced to Mr Xia the overview of the healthcare system of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR). Professor Lo said, "Having high-quality healthcare professions and an efficient healthcare system in place, Hong Kong's multiple health indicators take a leading position globally and the city is also one of the places with the longest life expectancy and lowest infant mortality rate worldwide. Nonetheless, the HKSAR Government still strives to tackle a number of challenges in the realm of healthcare, such as ageing population, healthcare manpower shortage and immense pressure on the public healthcare system.

"In this connection, it is essential for Hong Kong to press ahead with reform and innovation in the healthcare system to cater for the mounting service demand of society. The Chief Executive set out in the healthcare chapter of the Policy Address announced last month various policy initiatives aiming at protecting public health, enhancing healthcare service quality and further advancing the efficiency of the healthcare system. The initiatives covered 10 areas, namely health and medical innovation hub, cross-boundary medical collaboration, healthcare manpower, digital healthcare record, oral health, primary healthcare, mental health, Chinese medicine development, enhancement to public healthcare services and combating communicable diseases."

He emphasised that the HKSAR Government will continue to fully leverage Hong Kong's healthcare strengths to develop into a health and medical innovation hub and build a "Healthy Hong Kong", as well as strenuously propelling medical innovation and collaboration in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA) to make collective contribution to the developments of the GBA and the country as a whole for integration into the nation's strategy of "Healthy China".

During his meeting with the Party Secretary and Commissioner of the NATCM, Professor Yu Yanhong, Professor Lo introduced the multiple policy initiatives in relation to the promotion of Chinese medicine (CM) development as set out in the Policy Address. These include accelerating the promotion of CM testing, scientific research and informatisation through the Government Chinese Medicines Testing Institute (GCMTI); launching a Digitalised Chinese Medicines Information Platform; formulating a Chinese Medicine Development Blueprint in collaboration with the CM sector to outline the long-term strategies; strengthening the integrated Chinese-Western medicine services

through extension to more hospitals and coverage to more disease areas; as well as promoting the establishment of a strategic co-operation mechanism between the first Chinese Medicine Hospital (CMH) in Hong Kong and a Mainland counterpart to support the commissioning and sustainable development of the CMH.

Professor Lo said, "CM plays an integral part in the healthcare system in Hong Kong. The HKSAR Government has all along been committed to driving the high-quality development of CM on all fronts. Among others, the Policy Address underscores the need to give full play to the strengths of the GCMTI. The HKSAR Government aspires to research and develop internationally recognised reference standards for CM and related products, coupled with transfer of technology to the CM industry for strengthening quality control. This will help establish the brand image of Hong Kong's CM drugs and develop the city into an international centre for CM testing and quality control, thus promoting the standardisation, modernisation and internationalisation of CM.

"The HKSAR Government will keep working closely with Mainland and international stakeholders to enhance exchanges and collaboration in the CM field as well as to bolster Hong Kong's vital role as the country's gateway to international markets to promote the inheritance, innovation and high-quality development of CM."

The delegation visited the Beijing Municipal Health Commission this morning. Professor Lo introduced to its Party Committee Secretary and Deputy Director, Mr Zhong Dongbo, the latest healthcare developments in Hong Kong, while members of the delegation shared Hong Kong's experience and achievements in healthcare development. They also had in-depth exchanges with Mainland counterparts in areas such as optimising hospital management, enhancing public health and improving healthcare service quality.

Professor Lo said, "After the COVID-19 epidemic, the HKSAR has been having closer and more frequent exchanges and co-operation with various Mainland provinces and cities in the field of healthcare development. We will keep up with our effort in strengthening and deepening such exchanges and co-operation to promote regional healthcare development, with a view to upgrading the quality and efficiency of the healthcare services to make concerted effort in contributing to the important national strategy of 'Healthy China'."

The delegation consists of members including the Permanent Secretary for Health, Mr Thomas Chan; the Director of Health, Dr Ronald Lam; the Chairman of the Hospital Authority (HA), Mr Henry Fan; and the Chief Executive of the HA, Dr Tony Ko. They will call on the National Medical Products Administration tomorrow (November 8).

