

Hospital Authority welcomes budget allocation for 2019-20

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

The Hospital Authority (HA) Chairman, Professor John Leong, welcomed the 2019-20 Budget announced by the Financial Secretary, Mr Paul Chan today (February 27) at the Legislative Council, which will increase the recurrent financial provision for the HA by \$5.3 billion to \$68.8 billion, representing a rise of over 8 per cent.

"Apart from the increased financial provision for the HA, we are delighted by the Government's commitment to sustain the development of public healthcare with the establishment of the \$10 billion public healthcare stabilisation fund," said Professor Leong.

Professor Leong also expressed gratitude for the Government's substantial increase in financial provision for 2019-20, in particular the additional recurrent funding allocation of more than \$700 million on staff retention measures. The HA plans to deploy the funding to improve the remuneration and promotion opportunities of frontline staff to boost their morale and retain staff serving in public hospitals.

"We are mindful of the heavy workload that our doctors are facing amid the manpower shortfall. We plan to adjust the rate of Fixed Rate Honorarium for doctors to boost the morale of medical staff. To encourage professional development of nursing staff, we propose to grant an increment to nurses who have attained specialty qualifications. We will also upgrade more Advanced Practice Nurse posts to enhance night shift supervision. Promotion posts will also be added for pharmacists," said Professor Leong.

"Facing a high turnover of supporting staff, we are currently reviewing their remuneration package so as to retain staff and attract more people to work in public hospitals. We will expedite our review with a view to enabling subsequent pay enhancements as soon as practicable, subject to the Board's approval," Professor Leong added.

Other measures to relieve the work pressure of frontline staff include, inter alia, the Special Retired and Rehire Scheme and recruiting more Executive Assistants (Ward).

The HA Chief Executive, Dr Leung Pak-yin, also expressed appreciation for the Government's additional resources to support the HA in improving the working environment and patient services.

"We are especially thankful that \$5 billion has been earmarked by the Government to expedite the upgrading and acquisition of medical equipment to enhance the healthcare quality and efficiency amid the advancement in medical

technology," said Dr Leung.

Dr Leung added that the HA plans to open about 500 new hospital beds in 2019-20 to meet service needs. With the Government's strong support, new medical services will continuously be introduced in phases at Hong Kong Children's Hospital, Tin Shui Wai Hospital and North Lantau Hospital in the coming years.

"The coverage of the HA Drug Formulary will be widened, complemented by the new measures to relax the means test mechanisms of the Samaritan Fund and the Community Care Fund. We will also enhance services in the treatment of cancer, diabetes mellitus, renal diseases, stroke and cardiac diseases. Mental health services will be strengthened for patients with common mental disorders, children and adolescents with mental health needs as well as psychogeriatric outreach services for elderly homes.

"The HA will continue to enhance patients' access to general outpatient and specialist outpatient services, while accident and emergency, operating theatre, diagnostic imaging, endoscopic and pharmacy services will also be enhanced to meet the increasing service demand," said Dr Leung.