

LCQ17: Hospitals in Northern Metropolis

Following is a question by the Hon Lau Kwok-fan and a written reply by the Secretary for Health, Professor Lo Chung-mau, in the Legislative Council today (December 11):

Question:

The Government indicated in 2021 that there would be three hospitals in the Northern Metropolis, namely the Kwu Tung North Hospital, the Hung Shui Kiu Hospital and the expanded North District Hospital (NDH). Under the Second Ten-year Hospital Development Plan, the Kwu Tung North Hospital is expected to become the core hospital in the Northern Metropolis, providing at least 1 600 beds according to preliminary estimates. However, according to the 2024 Policy Address, while the expanded NDH will be ready for service, and the Government will set aside sites in Ngau Tam Mei to build a new campus and an integrated medical teaching and research hospital for a third medical school, there is no more mention of the Kwu Tung North Hospital. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) of the total number of hospital beds expected to be provided in the Northern Metropolis over the next decade according to the current plan; whether it has assessed if such number is sufficient to meet the demand of the population in the Northern Metropolis by then;
- (2) given that according to the information on the NDH Expansion website, NDH's new acute block will be completed in 2028, how the authorities will ensure the completion of the relevant works as scheduled; as the Government indicated that NDH will provide 1 500 additional beds upon completion of the expansion project, of the expected timetable for putting such beds into service;
- (3) as the last-term Government has pointed out that the Kwu Tung North Hospital would be developed into a research hospital with comprehensive functions to provide treatment and consultation services, and it would also be developed for medical research and development and teaching purposes to achieve synergy with life sciences industry in the San Tin Technopole, and at least 1 600 beds would be provided in the hospital according to preliminary estimates, whether the aforesaid positioning of the Kwu Tung North Hospital has changed under the Government's latest planning; if so, of the reasons for that; if not, the details of the Kwu Tung North Hospital construction plan;
- (4) as it has been reported that some 3 000 beds would be provided in the integrated medical teaching and research hospital preliminarily planned to be built in Ngau Tam Mei under the 2024 Policy Address, of the division of work between the Kwu Tung North Hospital and the integrated medical teaching and research hospital, as well as their respective positionings; and

(5) as the last-term Government has indicated that the Government had plans to allocate land for the development of private hospitals in the Northern Metropolis, of the specific planning at present (including the location where sites are to be set aside for private hospital development, as well as the relevant implementation plan and timetable)?

Reply:

President,

In consultation with the Hospital Authority (HA), the reply to the question raised by the Hon Lau Kwok-fan 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 of service demand arising from population growth and demographic changes, rising prevalence of chronic diseases, technology advancement, manpower supply as well as service arrangements of the clusters. The HA monitors the utilisation of various healthcare services and plans future hospital services according to the population projection parameters of various districts of Hong Kong and the development plans of the Government.

The Northern Metropolis (NM) is located within the current catchment areas of the New Territories East (NTE) and New Territories West (NTW) Clusters. Under the First Hospital Development Plan (HDP), there are three projects in these two clusters, including the expansion of North District Hospital (NDH), the redevelopment of Prince of Wales Hospital, phase 2 (stage 1) and the extension of Operating Theatre Block for Tuen Mun Hospital. It is anticipated that a total of 1 950 additional beds and other hospital facilities will be provided by 2031 in the New Territories after the progressive completion of the three projects, bringing the physical bed capacity in the NTE and NTW Clusters to a total of about 12 000 beds by then.

Among these projects, the main works of the expansion of NDH project already commenced in September 2024 for target completion in about six and a half years and with the aim of completing the new acute block in 2028 for gradual commissioning of services starting from 2029. This can alleviate the projected short- to medium-term service demand in the NTE Cluster under the First HDP. The HA and its consultant team will closely monitor the works progress to ensure the completion of the expansion project as scheduled. Upon completion of the expansion project, the HA will flexibly deploy internal resources to further formulate the detailed arrangements, such as the number of beds and the corresponding manpower requirements in different specialties, for commissioning the services in a phased approach.

Regarding the long-term demand in the NM as well as the entire New Territories, the Health Bureau (HHB) and the HA are reviewing the Second HDP by taking into account the future city-wide planning (including the latest developments of the NM and other new development areas), the Government's latest population statistics, anticipated population distribution and

projected healthcare service demand, and the supply and status of the sites required, etc. In view of the latest developments of the NM, the HA will consider stepping up the provision of hospital beds and facilities in relevant districts and rationalising the existing service provisions of hospital clusters, so as to propose distribution of projects to meet the projected service demand. After the completion of the review, the Government will announce the details of the Second HDP in due course.

(3) and (4) The Government announced in the 2024 Policy Address that, to dovetail with the development of the NM and local demand, a site of about nine hectares has been reserved by the Government in the central part of Ngau Tam Mei (NTM) for developing a new integrated medical teaching and research hospital which will become the flagship hospital of the NM with about 3 000 beds, providing comprehensive healthcare services for the new population in the NM.

As mentioned above, the HHB and the HA are reviewing the Second HDP, which involves the study of the details and implementation schedules of the various hospital development projects (including the construction of a new integrated medical teaching and research hospital at NTM); the prioritisation of the proposed projects under the Second HDP for optimisation of use of public resources required for construction of such hospitals; and the consideration of providing hospital beds and facilities in relevant districts as necessary in view of the developments of the NM and rationalisation of the role delineation and distribution of the existing hospitals in clusters and the proposed development projects.

In particular, considering that the relatively small size of the site reserved for healthcare facilities at Kwu Tung North (KTN) New Development Area and the constraints in surrounding areas for site expansion, the HHB has identified and reserved another site for healthcare facilities at NTM, with this site being more than double of that at KTN in terms of size and adjacent to the site reserved for the campus of the third medical school. The Government plans to replace the previously proposed new hospital at KTN with the new integrated medical teaching and research hospital planned for construction at NTM. This will better meet the local healthcare demand and be more cost effective.

Regarding the role delineation among and positioning of hospitals, the HA plans and develops various public healthcare services on a cluster basis. The HA delineates the role and positioning of each hospital within each cluster by taking into account a number of factors to ensure smooth referral of patients among various public healthcare units and transition of treatments in a bid to deliver comprehensive and appropriate healthcare services for supporting the patient journey. Given the anticipated significant changes in the future distribution of the overall population in Hong Kong, while reviewing the Second HDP, the Government will also review the need for re-organising the existing management structure and cluster delineation for the public healthcare services provided by the HA having regard to the population distribution and structure, with a view to providing optimal healthcare services to the public.

After the completion of the review, the Government will announce the details of the Second HDP in due course.

(5) In line with the NM Development Strategy, the Chief Executive in Council approved the draft San Tin Technopole Outline Zoning Plan in September 2024. A site of about two hectares therein has been reserved for development of healthcare facilities which may include private hospital use. The HHB will continue to work with the relevant bureaux/ departments to explore the development timetable following land resumption and site formation, while the actual planning of the site will be subject to market response.