LCQ8: Promoting development of standards in Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area

Following is a question by the Hon Chan Han-pan and a written reply by the Acting Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Dr Bernard Chan, in the Legislative Council today (June 21):

Question:

It has been reported that the authorities of Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao have earlier signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on jointly promoting the development of standards in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA Standards), and the relevant list of GBA Standards covers a total of 110 items in 25 fields including Chinese medicine and logistics. There are views that the signing of the MOU is part of the "soft connectivity" of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA) and will help promote commodity circulation and integrated development among the various cities in the GBA. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether the authorities have set up a dedicated organisation to deal with matters relating to the GBA Standards; if so, of its functions and composition, and the timetable; if not, the reasons for that;

(2) of the Government's role in setting the GBA Standards; whether industries can proactively propose the setting of the GBA Standards for certain types of goods or services; if they can, of the responsible government department and the procedure, and whether it has formulated performance pledges for the work concerned; if they cannot, the reasons for that; and

(3) given that the Guangdong Province has streamlined the vetting and approval process for the registration of Hong Kong registered traditional proprietary Chinese medicines for external use in the Mainland cities of the GBA, whether the authorities have plans to assist the industry in striving for the Mainland authorities' streamlining of the vetting and approval process for the registration of Hong Kong registered traditional medicines for internal application on the Mainland through the relevant GBA Standards; if so, of the details and timetable; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

Having consulted the Health Bureau, the consolidated reply to the question raised by the Hon Chan is as follows:

The development of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA) Standards can promote the interconnectivity and integrated development of the three places, deepening Hong Kong's economic and trade exchanges and co-operation with the Mainland and Macao. In this connection, the governments of Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on jointly promoting the development of the GBA Standards on April 24, 2023, to promote the harmonisation of rules in relevant sectors in the region, and improve product and service quality.

The list of GBA Standards announced on the same day of signing the MOU covers a total of 110 items in the fields of food quality and safety, Cantonese cuisine, transportation, mechanical and electrical products, as well as medical care, nursing care, education, e-sports, etc. These 110 items are drawn up after the Guangdong authorities' liaison with various relevant groups and enterprises from the trade, related government departments and organisations, universities and experts in Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao, and are formulated after public consultations.

The GBA Standards and related information are available on the GBA Standard Information Public Service Platform (GBA Standard Platform) (www.gbsrc.org.cn) for public access and voluntary adoption by the trade. The Platform is managed by the Standardization Research Center for the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA Standardization Research Center), which was established jointly by the People's Government of Guangdong Province and the nation's Standardization Administration.

The GBA Standardization Research Center plans to issue guidelines later this year regarding the formulation of a new round of the GBA Standards, and invite applications from the trade in the three places. Interested organisations and enterprises should submit applications through the GBA Standard Platform in accordance with the specific requirements set out in the guidelines, for the GBA Standardization Research Center's assessment and examination.

The formulation of the GBA Standards involves many sectors, as well as relevant technical and professional knowledge. The Trade and Industry Department (TID) is responsible for co-ordinating the participation of relevant bureaux/departments of the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSARG) in the work on the GBA Standards, and maintaining close contacts with relevant authorities of Guangdong Province and Macao. The TID will continue to liaise with relevant authorities of Guangdong Province and Macao with regard to the formulation of the new round of the GBA Standards, and co-ordinate within the HKSARG to jointly take the relevant work forward. Upon issuance of the new guidelines, the TID will issue a Commercial Information Circular promptly to encourage the trade to submit applications for the GBA Standards, and will also invite the relevant bureaux/departments to encourage industrial, commercial and professional organisations and enterprises under their respective purviews to submit applications. The co-ordination work on the GBA Standards is handled with the TID's existing resources.

With regard to proprietary Chinese medicines (pCms), the Guangdong Provincial Medical Products Administration (GDMPA) announced in August 2021 the arrangement of streamlining the approval procedures for Hong Kong registered traditional pCms for external use to be registered and sold on the Mainland, and officially began accepting registration applications in September 2021. A total of nine pCms for external use registered in Hong Kong have been approved to be sold on the Mainland through streamlined procedures so far. It is understood that the GDMPA is processing more applications gradually, and more Hong Kong registered traditional pCms for external use are expected to be able to be registered and sold in the GBA through the relevant measure, thereby greatly reducing the processing time and simplifying the procedures. The relevant measure enables Hong Kong pCm manufacturers to expand their markets, as well as creates favourable conditions for Hong Kong pCms to "go global" in the long run. The Health Bureau will continue to closely monitor the implementation of the aforementioned measure, and maintain close liaison with the relevant Mainland authorities to explore the possibility of further enhancing the aforementioned measure (including further expanding its coverage), with a view to assisting the Chinese medicine drug industry of Hong Kong in expanding its market.