

Secretary for Health commences visit to Beijing (with photos)

The Secretary for Health, Professor Lo Chung-mau, led a delegation to begin their visit to Beijing today (September 26) and called on the National Health Commission (NHC), the National Administration of Traditional Chinese Medicine (NATCM) and the General Administration of Customs of the People's Republic of China (GACC) to introduce to the Mainland officials the latest developments of various healthcare reforms in Hong Kong to keep deepening synergistic collaboration on healthcare-related areas with the Mainland.

During the meeting with Vice-minister of the NHC Mr Yu Xuejun, Professor Lo engaged in an in-depth discussion on how to further deepen cross-boundary collaboration on health and medical innovation between the Mainland and the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR). Professor Lo also actively put forward to the NHC multiple proposals on measures for promoting cross-boundary flow of innovation elements (including entry and exit of human genetic resources) in the Development Plan for Shenzhen Park of Hetao Shenzhen-Hong Kong Science and Technology Innovation Co-operation Zone (Development Plan for Shenzhen Park) promulgated by the State Council, with a view to supporting and encouraging innovative application of advanced biomedicine technologies with full effort.

Professor Lo said that the Development Plan for Shenzhen Park emphasises co-ordinated development of Shenzhen and Hong Kong through the establishment of an internationally competitive base for industrial pilot-scale testing and transformation in Hetao to support the innovative application of advanced biomedicine technologies. "The Chief Executive's 2023 Policy Address" also proposed the development of Hong Kong into an international health and medical innovation hub. To this end, the Health Bureau (HHB) strives to push forward with multiple key initiatives as follows:

- (1) To reform Hong Kong's evaluation, approval and registration mechanism for drugs and medical devices and prepare for the establishment of the Hong Kong Centre for Medical Products Regulation, with a view to progressing towards the "primary evaluation" approach;
- (2) To join forces with the Shenzhen Municipal Government to set up in the Hetao Area an international clinical trial collaboration platform for the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area under the "one zone, two parks" model in expectation of simultaneous commencement of operation in the fourth quarter of this year;
- (3) To promote cross-boundary real-world data research; and
- (4) To introduce world-leading enterprises of advanced therapeutic products as well as innovative drugs and medical devices.

He continued, "The development of innovative drugs and medical devices

not only enhances healthcare standards but also transforms the industry, thus realising the vision of introducing good drugs for use in Hong Kong, bringing benefits to citizens with research and development, fostering transformation of innovation and technology, and driving the development of the industry. The healthcare system of Hong Kong must keep abreast of times and pursue transformation with innovation. With the staunch support of national policies in various areas, the HHB will certainly make greater efforts to motivate the local healthcare and medical sector to actively integrate into the overall national development by fully utilising the unique advantages of the HKSAR and playing an active role in the country's comprehensive deepening of reforms, thereby serving the nation's needs with the strengths of Hong Kong."

Professor Lo and the delegation today also met with the Commissioner of the NATCM, Professor Yu Yanhong, and discussed issues related to the promotion of the development of Chinese medicine (CM). He said, "The HKSAR Government expresses sincere gratitude to the NATCM for its robust support for the development of CM in Hong Kong, particularly with regard to the establishment of the first Chinese Medicine Hospital of Hong Kong and the Government Chinese Medicines Testing Institute as well as collaboration on rolling out the Hong Kong Chinese Medicine Talent Training Programme, etc. The HKSAR Government will continue to press ahead with the high-quality development of CM in Hong Kong on all fronts by giving full play to the characteristics of CM in Hong Kong and the city's strengths in areas such as service delivery, standard-setting, international connectivity and clinical research in a bid to foster the better integration of Hong Kong into the construction of CM highlands in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area as well as the overall development of the country, thereby assisting our nation to propel CM to go global."

Separately, at the meeting with the Head of the Department of Political Affairs of the GACC, Ms Lyu Weihong, Professor Lo said that, since the signing of the Co-operation Arrangement for Entry-exit Health Inspection and Quarantine between the GACC and the Health Bureau of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government by the HHB and the GACC in November last year, the HKSAR Government has been maintaining close co-operation with the entry-exit health inspection and quarantine authorities of the Mainland as well as strengthening the joint efforts in disease prevention and control in terms of entry-exit health inspection and quarantine between the Mainland and Hong Kong, with a view to safeguarding the wellbeing and safety of residents and travellers of the two places. The two parties also exchanged views on the promotion of cross-boundary flow of innovation elements as mentioned in the Development Plan for Shenzhen Park.

Members of the delegation include the Director of Health, Dr Ronald Lam; Deputy Secretary for Health Mr Sam Hui; the Chairman of the Hospital Authority (HA), Mr Henry Fan; and the Chief Executive of the HA, Dr Tony Ko. The delegation will call on the Hong Kong and Macao Affairs Office of the State Council and the National Medical Products Administration tomorrow (September 27) before departing for Hong Kong in the evening.

