

# Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Pearl River Delta Regional Air Quality Monitoring Network results for 2023 released

Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao jointly released today (December 11) a report on air quality in 2023 under the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Pearl River Delta Regional Air Quality Monitoring Network (the Network) which indicates a long-term and significant downward trend of various air pollutants, namely sulphur dioxide (SO<sub>2</sub>), nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>), carbon monoxide (CO), respirable suspended particulates (RSPs, PM<sub>10</sub>) and fine suspended particulates (FSPs, PM<sub>2.5</sub>) concentrations.

The report reveals that 2023 annual average concentrations for these parameters have declined between 17 per cent and 86 per cent from their peak levels (shown in Annexes 1 and 2). The decline well demonstrates the effectiveness of emission reduction measures implemented across the three places in improving air quality in the Pearl River Delta region. However, ozone (O<sub>3</sub>) annual average concentrations have remained stagnant in recent years, indicating the need for alleviation of the regional photochemical pollution. In response, the study on "Characterization of photochemical ozone formation, regional and super-regional transportation in the Greater Bay Area" was carried out accordingly and concluded in early 2024, providing scientific data for further understanding on the causes and regional and super-regional transport characteristics of ozone within the region.

The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government has continued to implement various air pollutant emission control measures covered in the Hong Kong Roadmap on Popularisation of Electric Vehicles (EVs), the Clean Air Plan for Hong Kong 2035 and Hong Kong's Climate Action Plan 2050 on marine and land transport, power plants and non-road mobile machinery to enhance air quality. Since 2019, Hong Kong has collaborated with Greater Bay Area cities to establish a domestic marine emission control area in the Pearl River Delta, requiring all vessels to use compliant fuel within Hong Kong waters while sailing or at berth. Ocean-going vessels are also required to use cleaner fuel while at berth. Furthermore, the HKSAR Government is preparing to amend the Air Pollution Control (Marine Light Diesel) Regulation and tighten the cap on the sulphur content of locally supplied marine light diesel from 0.05 per cent to 0.001 per cent.

For vehicles, the HKSAR Government is committed to phasing out approximately 40 000 Euro IV diesel commercial vehicles progressively by the end of 2027 through a subsidy scheme. The Government deploys roadside remote sensing equipment to control exhaust emissions from vehicles. New registrations of fuel-propelled private cars including hybrids will cease in 2035 or earlier, and approximately 700 electric buses and 3 000 electric taxis will be introduced by end-2027. The HKSAR Government has been actively

implementing various measures to promote green transformation of vehicles, and is striving towards zero vehicular emissions by 2050. These efforts have produced early results, with the number of EVs in Hong Kong increasing roughly sevenfold in five years, from about 14 000 in 2019 to over 102 000 in September 2024.

Guangdong Province published and implemented the "Notice on Implementation of Monitoring Requirements on Fugitive Emission of volatile organic compounds (VOCs) from Factories Issued by Department of Ecology and Environment of Guangdong Province", the "Notice on Strengthening Control of VOCs Emissions in Storage and Transportation of Oil Depots and Petrochemical and Chemical Enterprises", the "Notice on Further Reduction of Nitrogen Oxides from Stationary and Mobile Sources issued by Department of Ecology and Environment of Guangdong Province", and the "Notice on Strengthening Environmental Control on Diesel Trucks of Key Vehicle-using Enterprises", as well as promulgating the local standard "Integrated Emission Standard of VOCs for Stationary Pollution Source" (DB44/2367-2022). Guangdong Province launched the hierarchical management of VOCs-related enterprises, enhanced the total VOCs management, advanced the control of industrial boilers and furnaces, upheld a co-ordinated approach across vehicle regulations, fuel standards, roadway management, and enterprise compliance to strengthen emissions regulations for diesel trucks operated by key enterprises, conduct compliance checks on new vehicles, improve emissions management for non-road mobile machinery and carry out regular sampling and inspection of the fuel quality and emissions of engineering machinery.

The Macao Special Administrative Region (Macao SAR) Government has been committed to improving air quality. In 2023, the Government of the Macao SAR announced the Long-Term Decarbonization Strategy of Macao and a related specific plan, the Electric Vehicle Promotion Plan of Macao. By promoting the implementation of these strategies and plans, significant reductions in air pollutants and greenhouse gas emissions are expected. The Macao SAR Government also continues to advance various measures on vehicular tailpipe emissions, the promotion of environmentally friendly vehicles, and the control of VOCs. These measures include reviewing and optimising tailpipe emission standards for both newly imported and in-use vehicles, encouraging vehicle owners to phase out high-polluting old vehicles through the Subsidy Scheme for Phasing out Old Motorcycles with Replacement of New Electric Motorcycles and the Subsidy Scheme for Phasing Out Old Diesel Vehicles, promoting the use of electric vehicles and enhancing related ancillary facilities, implementing import controls on high-VOC automotive repair paints and varnishes, and continuously advancing the study on regulation of other products containing VOCs at a high level.

The Network comprises a total of 23 air monitoring stations in Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao. The Ecological and Environmental Monitoring Centre of Guangdong, the Environmental Protection Department (EPD) of Hong Kong, the Macao Environmental Protection Bureau and the Macao Meteorological and Geophysical Bureau are responsible for the co-ordination, management and operation of the monitoring stations in the respective places and the release of quarterly and annual monitoring results. The relevant reports are

available at the following websites:

- The Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Regional Air Quality Monitoring Information System ([gdeem.cn:20047/#/](http://gdeem.cn:20047/#/));
- The Department of Ecology and Environment of Guangdong Province ([gdee.gd.gov.cn](http://gdee.gd.gov.cn));
- The EPD of Hong Kong ([www.epd.gov.hk](http://www.epd.gov.hk)); and
- The Macao Environmental Protection Bureau ([www.dspa.gov.mo](http://www.dspa.gov.mo)) or the Macao Meteorological and Geophysical Bureau ([www.smg.gov.mo](http://www.smg.gov.mo)).

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## LCQ1: Taking forward patriotic education

Following is a question by Dr the Hon So Cheung-wing and a reply by the Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs, Mr Erick Tsang Kwok-wai, in the Legislative Council today (December 11):

Question:

Established in April this year, the Working Group on Patriotic Education (the Working Group) harnesses collective wisdom, contributes insights and takes actions in respect of the work strategies, directions and plans for holistic implementation of patriotic education. On taking forward patriotic education, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) as it is learnt that many galleries and exhibitions organised on the own initiative of community groups with an affection for the country and Hong Kong are crafted with ingenuity, skilfully blending patriotic education with exhibition contents and art, whether the Government has compiled statistics on the current total number of community-operated galleries for patriotic exhibitions in Hong Kong; whether the Working Group has specific plans to foster concerted efforts between government departments and non-governmental organisations in making good use of the valuable patriotic education resources in the community; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(2) given that the Working Group has set up an electronic mailbox to invite all sectors of the community to offer views and suggestions for more effective implementation of patriotic education, of the total number of valid views and suggestions received by the Working Group so far, and whether it has accordingly adjusted and refined its existing plans or launched new plans; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(3) whether it knows the total numbers of schools, teachers and students participating in the activities of the Patriotic Education Centre since its

establishment, and whether the Government has made recommendations on improvements to such activities?

Reply:

President,

Having consulted the Education Bureau (EDB), a consolidated reply in response to the questions raised by Dr the Hon So Cheung-wing is as follows:

The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government attaches great importance to the promotion of patriotic education and endeavours to build mainstream values in Hong Kong characterised by patriotism with affection for our country and Hong Kong and in conformity with the principle of "one country, two systems". The Chief Executive has put forward various initiatives related to patriotic education in this year's and last year's Policy Address, including establishing the Working Group on Patriotic Education (the Working Group) under the Constitution and Basic Law Promotion Steering Committee chaired by the Chief Secretary for Administration; organising activities in commemoration of the 80th anniversary of victory in the War of Resistance in the coming year; organising, by the EDB, a range of joint school and cross sectoral activities under the "Love Our Home, Treasure Our Country 3.0" series, continuing to enhance Chinese History and national geography education in primary and secondary schools, as well as enriching patriotism and history elements in Mainland exchange programmes; and etc.. As such, we hope to take the all out and all direction approach to vigorously promote the spirit of patriotism and cultivate an enhanced patriotic atmosphere in society, enabling patriotism to take root in Hong Kong as well as in people's minds.

Since its establishment in April this year, the Working Group has taken forward the relevant work in a proactive manner and proposed various short, medium and long-term policy measures in relation to patriotic education having regard to the actual circumstances of Hong Kong. The Working Group also understands that patriotic education is a matter of connection with people's heart and a task that requires ongoing effort, and should be conducted through a soft and heart-moving approach. At the same time, to achieve success in implementing patriotic education, apart from the Government's effort, it is vital to have active and collective participation of all sectors of the community and the general public.

To unite and strengthen efforts for promotion of patriotic education, since its establishment, the Working Group has taken the initiative to conduct research and studies by inviting all sectors of the community to offer suggestions on how to effectively promote patriotic education. We have received very enthusiastic responses. The Secretariat of the Working Group received a total of over 300 comments and suggestions, covering areas such as school education, Chinese culture, Chinese history, national development, use of media for promotion, education on history of the War of Resistance, and proactive facilitation of co-operation with the community groups. The relevant views and suggestions have been passed to the four sub-groups under the Working Group and relevant government departments for study and

consideration. Based on the feasible suggestions, we will propose policy measures for consideration by the Working Group in due course.

In addition to widely soliciting opinions, the Government places great importance on patriotic education activities organised by community groups, including the development of patriotic education resources such as exhibition halls. To observe the related facilities and show support, members of the Working Group paid visits to various local patriotic education bases and exhibition centres. In July this year, the Working Group visited two community-operated facilities, namely the Hong Kong Sha Tau Kok Anti-Japanese War Memorial Hall (the Law's House) and the exhibition hall for Hong Kong patriotic education in Wing Ping Tsuen, San Tin. The exhibition facilities displayed a number of artefacts on patriotic education and the history of the War of Resistance, facilitating members of the public to enhance their understanding of the country and foster the love for our motherland and Hong Kong. The Working Group also visited the National Security Exhibition Gallery at the Hong Kong Museum of History in October this year. The next step for the Working Group will be to continue with its site visits, including visits to the Patriotic Education Centre of the Hong Kong Federation of Education Workers and the Youth Development and National Education Base managed by the Hong Kong Army Cadets Association in Tsing Yi.

In fact, Hong Kong has rich patriotic education resources, including the Hong Kong Museum of History, the Hong Kong Palace Museum, the Hong Kong Museum of the War of Resistance and Coastal Defence, the Hong Kong Heritage Museum as well as the Hong Kong Science Museum, where a wealth of patriotic educational materials on Chinese history, national achievements, fine traditions of Chinese culture, and the wartime journey of Hong Kong are displayed, and thematic exhibitions are organised from time to time. For example, the "Glorious Voyage: Splendid Achievements of the People's Republic of China in Its 75 Years" Exhibition Series has been held at the Hong Kong Museum of History and the Hong Kong Science Museum since September 27, illustrating the struggle that our country had been through and its perseverance for its extraordinary achievements in advancement over the past three-quarters of a century from a variety of perspectives.

Apart from the museums and exhibitions mentioned above, there are quite a number of landmarks and relics with historical value in Hong Kong, which can be leveraged to enrich the content and experience of patriotic education. Examples include Lion Rock Historic Walk, Shing Mun War Relics Trail and Luk Keng War Relics Trail, as well as the Memorial Monuments for Martyrs during World War II at Wu Kau Tang and Tsam Chuk Wan constructed to honour members of an anti-Japanese guerrilla force called the "Hong Kong and Kowloon Independent Brigade of the East River Column", and local civilians who sacrificed themselves to defend Hong Kong against the Japanese invaders. These two monuments have been incorporated into the "List of State Facilities and Sites Marking the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression" published by the State Council, highlighting their significant patriotic educational value.

The Government highly encourages the community to promote patriotic

education together and continue to develop various patriotic education resources, including education bases, exhibition halls and historic sites, or patriotic figures and heroic deeds, etc. The Working Group will actively study how to consolidate community efforts and make the best use of such valuable patriotic education resources, so as to comprehensively take forward the promotion of patriotic education in a diversified manner.

As for the Patriotic Education Centre (the Centre) established by the Hong Kong Federation of Education Workers, the Centre has been actively echoing the effort of the HKSAR Government in promoting national education by organising activities such as educational visits and teacher professional development since its establishment in 2022. According to the information provided by the Centre, since its commencement of operation in September 2022, as of November 2024, about 330 schools and 70 organisations joined the national studies activities of the Centre, with a total attendance of about 27 600. Besides, the Centre organised over 150 on-site seminars at schools with an attendance of about 15 000 teachers and students in total.

In addition to the activities organised by the Centre on its own initiative, the EDB commissioned the Centre through established procedures to provide Onsite Enrichment Seminars on National Security Education for primary and secondary schools implementing the local curriculum. From March to the end of August 2024, the Centre provided onsite seminars for over 3 400 teachers from 64 secondary schools, receiving positive feedback. With reference to teachers' feedback, the EDB has continued to make suggestions with a view to improving the design of the activities. Besides, the Hong Kong Academy for Gifted Education subvented by the EDB collaborated with the Centre to organise programmes relating to diplomacy for the gifted, and provided suggestions suited to the learning needs of gifted students when developing the content of the programmes.

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## LCQ2: Promoting development of industry and commerce

Following is a question by the Hon Sunny Tan and a reply by the Secretary for Innovation, Technology and Industry, Professor Sun Dong, in the Legislative Council today (December 11):

Question:

To promote the upgrading and transformation of traditional industries while actively nurturing emerging ones, the 2024 Policy Address announced the formulation of a medium to long-term development plan for new industrialisation in Hong Kong (the Plan). In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) in formulating the Plan, apart from working out the overall development direction of traditional and emerging industries from a macro perspective, whether it will also examine the current development situation and comparative advantages of different industries from a micro perspective, including identifying those industries which are more competitive in areas such as innovative research and development, product development, production and manufacturing, supply chain management, market internationalisation and tariff advantages, in order to formulate relevant medium to long-term development strategies and support measures targeting at individual industrial sectors with relative advantages and potentials, so as to map out more precisely the development of new industrialisation in Hong Kong to drive different industries to accelerate the formation of industrial clusters as well as the vigorous development of the ecosystems;

(2) how to promote better interface and deeper cooperation between the various industries in Hong Kong (including the textiles and garment industry) and the departments, organisations, associations, chambers and enterprises of the corresponding industries in the Mainland to strengthen Hong Kong's roles as a super-connector and a super value-adder; and

(3) how to make good use of the commercial and trade networks of overseas and the Mainland Economic and Trade Offices to jointly deepen the regional co-operation and exchanges on industry and commerce between local industries and Hong Kong enterprises in the Mainland and overseas by leveraging the advantages of their extensive international connections?

Reply:

President,

On the basis of the development directions and strategies outlined in the Hong Kong Innovation and Technology Development Blueprint (the Blueprint), the Innovation, Technology and Industry Bureau (ITIB) has been accelerating the development of new quality productive forces tailored to local conditions, and expeditiously propelling new industrialisation, through various measures. For instance, we have supported local manufacturers to upgrade to smart manufacturing through the New Industrialisation Funding Scheme, which has, up to the present day, supported over 90 production lines with subsidy of around \$365 million. In addition, we launched in September this year the \$10 billion New Industrialisation Acceleration Scheme to provide matching grants for strategic enterprises to set up new smart manufacturing facilities in Hong Kong. These measures have all displayed the determination of the current-term Government in promoting new industrialisation.

With regard to the Hon Sunny Tan's questions, my reply is as follows:

(1) The ITIB will engage a professional consultancy firm to, on the basis of the Blueprint, launch a study to provide recommendations on new industrialisation and relevant professional services in Hong Kong, including looking into the development status, constraints and difficulties faced. At the same time, we will explore Hong Kong's unique advantages under the "one

country, two systems" and the economic development trends in the region, and to dissect the competitive edges of Hong Kong vis-à-vis that of our regional competitors in view of the impact and opportunities brought about by Hong Kong's development of strategic emerging and future industries. On such basis, we will deliberate an appropriate proposal to leverage the development of new quality productive forces, with an aim to consolidating and enhancing the economic value of Hong Kong's manufacturing industry through new industrialisation, and, in turn, support the formulation of a modern industrial ecosystem with advanced manufacturing as its backbone. This process will require making reference to relevant experiences in the Mainland and overseas in order to provide policy recommendations for the way forward. We are proactively making relevant preparations with a view of commencing the study as soon as practicable.

(2) In consultation with the Commerce and Economic Development Bureau (CEDB) and the Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau, our reply to the second and third parts of the question is as follows:

The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government is committed to giving full play to our roles as a "super connector" and "super value-adder", thereby assisting Hong Kong and Mainland enterprises and professional services in exploring Belt and Road (B&R) business opportunities. Invest Hong Kong (InvestHK) and the Hong Kong Trade Development Council (HKTDC) are setting up a mechanism to enhance their interfaces for attracting Mainland enterprises with potentials to establish international or regional headquarters in Hong Kong for managing offshore trading and supply chain, while providing one-stop diversified professional advisory services for enterprises in Hong Kong looking to go global. The HKTDC's overseas network will also provide on-site support services to these enterprises for developing their supply chains.

In addition to the overseas visits and the signing of relevant memoranda of understanding and agreements by local business delegations led by the Chief Executive and Secretaries of Departments and Directors of Bureaux to encourage collaboration on various fronts and to strengthen commercial and trade ties, the Belt and Road Summit, held by the CEDB and the HKTDC over the years, has provided a quality platform for enterprises from Hong Kong, the Mainland and countries along the B&R to explore business opportunities together. The HKSAR Government plans to organise a B&R cross-professional forum and examine the establishment of a B&R capacity building centre next year, with a view to forging ties with the B&R countries and regions by using our soft power, thereby paving way for collaboration.

(3) Currently, the HKSAR Government has five Mainland Offices and 11 liaison units on the Mainland, and 14 overseas Hong Kong Economic and Trade Offices (ETOs). Together with the offices of InvestHK and the HKTDC worldwide, Hong Kong has set up offices in 66 cities around the world, covering 129 countries.

The various Mainland Offices and ETOs will continue their efforts to fully dovetail with the relevant policy measures of the HKSAR Government in promoting Hong Kong through different events, with a view to attracting



investment and talents to develop in Hong Kong, and facilitate Hong Kong enterprises in expanding into the Mainland and overseas markets. They will also collaborate closely with provincial and municipal governments on the Mainland, and other relevant agencies to promote and explain the HKSAR Government's major policies, Hong Kong's unique advantages, and opportunities brought about by the B&R and the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area.

The Government will continue to examine how to expand its global office network, and strengthen Hong Kong's economic and trade connection with partners around the globe, in particular emerging markets.

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## 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.

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## **LCQ4: Curbing sexual assault incidents in residential care homes for persons with disabilities**

Following is a question by the Hon Michael Tien and a reply by the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Mr Chris Sun, in the Legislative Council today (December 11):

Question:

It has been reported that a few months ago a staff member of a residential care home for persons with disabilities (RCHD) was arrested for allegedly sexually assaulting residents in the RCHD and the RCHD operator concerned did not make public the incident until two months later, arousing public concern about the criteria and policy adopted by the Government in handling similar incidents. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) as this is not the first time that similar incidents have occurred, whether the Government has established criteria and guidelines for the timing of announcing such incidents; if not, whether it will immediately review and consult the stakeholders (e.g. the victims and their families, the residents and their families, the relevant professionals and operators), and announce the criteria and guidelines for the timing of announcing such incidents after striking a balance between considering the emotions of the victims and their families and ensuring the public's right to know; and

(2) given that after the occurrence of the aforesaid incident, the Secretary for Labour and Welfare indicated that the Social Welfare Department (SWD) had strictly followed the monitoring procedures and issued a written warning to the operator concerned, but some members of the public have criticised that the relevant monitoring procedures and penalty mechanism are not at all effective in curbing such incidents, whether the SWD will learn from the bitter experiences and address the urgent needs of the families of RCHD residents by comprehensively reviewing the relevant monitoring mechanism and introducing effective measures to prevent the recurrence of such incidents?

Reply:

President,

My reply to the Hon Michael Tien's question is as follows:

(1) The Social Welfare Department (SWD) regulates the operation of residential care homes for persons with disabilities (RCHDs) in accordance with the Residential Care Homes (Persons with Disabilities) Ordinance (Cap. 613) (the Ordinance), Residential Care Homes (Persons with Disabilities) Regulation (Cap. 613A) (the Regulation) and Code of Practice for Residential Care Homes (Persons with Disabilities) (Code of Practice). Under the existing requirement, in the event of a special incident, the RCHD shall inform the Licensing Office of Residential Care Homes for Persons with Disabilities (LORCHD) of the SWD timely and submit a special incident report to LORCHD within three calendar days after a special incident has occurred. The Government will consider the nature and severity of the incident, the impact on service users, the follow-up actions of the operating organisation and law enforcement bodies, etc, to determine whether it is necessary to disclose the incident. When determining the appropriate timing of announcement, it is necessary to strike a balance carefully. Prior counselling and support would be provided to the victims, their families and other affected persons, and their emotions will also be taken care of. Since each special incident is unique and the factors for consideration vary, it is not suitable to set a fixed time frame for announcement.

(2) The Government attaches great importance to the service quality of residential care homes (RCHs) and strives to strengthen the monitoring of their operations and management to improve their service standards.

In the monitoring of RCHDs, dedicated teams of LORCHD of the SWD regularly conduct surprise inspections at RCHDs and take strict enforcement

actions against non-compliant RCHDs. Depending on the nature and severity of the non-compliant items, the SWD will issue advisory letters, warning letters or written directions for remedial measures to the RCHDs and urge the RCHDs to implement corresponding improvement measures. If an RCHD continues to show no improvement, the SWD will consider instigating prosecution actions.

To enhance the transparency of the RCHD monitoring mechanism, warning records of non-compliant RCHDs would be uploaded onto the SWD's website and the Information Website for RCHDs, where they are kept for 12 months. In addition, records of convictions for violating the Ordinance or the Regulation would be posted on these websites and kept for 24 months.

To safeguard the well-being of residents, the Code of Practice stipulates that all staff of an RCHD (including home managers, nurses, health workers, care workers and ancillary workers) should undergo the Sexual Conviction Record Check Scheme implemented by the Security Bureau through the Hong Kong Police Force prior to employment or renewal of employment contracts. RCHDs are also required to be equipped with CCTV surveillance systems that have recording functions to enhance security and supervision of their operations, thus protecting the safety of residents.

The Government has been implementing the Residential Care Homes Legislation (Miscellaneous Amendments) Ordinance 2023 by phases, including enhancing the accountability of RCH operators, raising the minimum staffing requirements, introducing a registration system for home managers, to ensure sufficient supervision of the operation, management and control of RCHs, thereby protecting the interests and safety of residents.

To increase the deterrent effect on law-breakers, the SWD has updated the security facility requirements in the Code of Practice in October 2024, requiring RCHDs to formulate policies and mechanisms for monitoring CCTV surveillance systems and viewing CCTV footage to enhance the monitoring of daily operations of RCHDs by the management.

Strengthening RCHD staff's knowledge of identifying, preventing, and handling abuse incidents is crucial in preventing abuse. The SWD hosted a seminar in October 2024 for management and general staff from all RCHDs on protecting residents from abuse. Relevant training will continue to be provided to RCHD staff to enhance their vigilance against similar incidents. To minimise the risk of abuse in RCHDs, the SWD has urged RCHDs to formulate effective measures, provide clear work guidelines, and arrange continuous on-the-job training and supervision for their staff.

In addition, enhancing knowledge and skills in protecting service users from abuse is one of the training themes of the SWD's Dedicated Fund in 2025. Social welfare organisations can apply for additional funding to strengthen relevant staff training.

â€‹Thank you, President.