

Commissioner for the Development of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area visits Zhongshan (with photos)

The Commissioner for the Development of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, Ms Maisie Chan, visited Zhongshan today (June 3) to meet with leaders of the Zhongshan Municipal Government and attend the Symposium for Promoting the Development of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (Zhongshan). She also visited a Hong Kong-invested pharmaceutical enterprise there.

Upon arrival in the morning, Ms Chan met with member of the Standing Committee of the Communist Party of China Zhongshan Municipal Committee and Vice Mayor of Zhongshan, Mr Ye Hongguang, to learn about the latest development of Zhongshan and exchange views on deepening co-operation between Hong Kong and Zhongshan to jointly promote the high-quality development of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area.

In the afternoon, Ms Chan attended the Symposium for Promoting the Development of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (Zhongshan) to explore with the participating government officials and business leaders the significant opportunities brought about by Greater Bay Area development to Hong Kong and Zhongshan. The Symposium was co-organised by the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area Development Promotion Centre of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government, the Office of the Leading Group for the Development of Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area of Zhongshan Municipality of Guangdong Province, and the Hong Kong and Macao Affairs Bureau of Zhongshan Municipality of Guangdong Province.

Speaking at the Symposium, Ms Chan said that since the commissioning of the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge in 2018 and the implementation of "Northbound Travel for Hong Kong Vehicles" Scheme in July last year, the travelling time between Hong Kong and Zhongshan has been significantly reduced, which has fostered the flow of people and deepened co-operation between the two places. With the imminent commissioning of the Shenzhen-Zhongshan Link and the completion of the new Zhongshan ferry terminal, passengers can travel between Hong Kong and Zhongshan within an hour whether by land or by sea, which will further facilitate Hong Kong people's pursuit of starting business, working and living in Zhongshan. This is also of great significance in developing a "one-hour living circle" among major cities of the Greater Bay Area. There will also be closer exchanges and integration between Hong Kong and Zhongshan in various economic, social and cultural aspects in the future.

Ms Chan said that under "one country, two systems", Hong Kong enjoys the

unique position of having the strong support of the motherland and being closely connected to the world. In particular, Hone Kong enjoys distinctive advantages in various professional fields including finance, innovation and technology, commerce and trade, intellectual property, legal, accounting, engineering, etc. Hong Kong and Zhongshan can achieve complementarity and co-ordinated development, leveraging Hong Kong's dual roles in "going global and attracting foreign investment". Ms Chan also encouraged talents and enterprises in Zhongshan to seek new directions, expand new businesses and tap into new markets through Hong Kong, and enhance the development of related industries in the two places to achieve complementarity and mutual benefits.

The Symposium has attracted about 2 400 guests, including government officials, representatives of trade associations, industry leaders and start-up entrepreneurs from Hong Kong and Zhongshan. Participants also had in-depth exchanges about the business and investment environment, policies on employment and entrepreneurship, as well as talent policies of Hong Kong and Zhongshan.

Ms Chan then visited a large-scale Hong Kong-invested pharmaceutical enterprise to learn about the operation and latest development of the pharmaceutical industry in the Mainland. The enterprise benefited from the integration and development of the pharmaceutical industry in the Greater Bay Area and has been breaking new ground of "Hong Kong pharmaceuticals produced in Guangdong". She encouraged Hong Kong enterprises to capitalise on the business opportunities brought about by the enormous market of the Greater Bay Area and to contribute actively to the development of the Area.



Government responds to media reports on seasonal influenza vaccines

In response to media reports on the use of seasonal influenza vaccination (SIV), a spokesman for the Department of Health (DH) today (June 3) stressed that the Government has all along been committed in encouraging members of the public to receive SIV, and has made arrangement to facilitate members of the public (including school children) to receive SIV through various SIV programmes. Given the potential immunisation gap in children due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Government has expanded the eligibility of the SIV programmes, from young children and primary students to persons aged 12 to 18 since the 2022/23 SIV season, meaning that the vaccination programme has covered all children and adolescents aged below 18 years. Currently, over 1.86 million doses of SIV had been administered under various SIV programmes in the 2023/24 season, representing an increase of 20 per cent comparing with the same period last year, reaching a record high.

School Outreach Vaccination Services

To enhance the vaccination rate of schoolchildren and to assist in arranging outreach vaccination services by schools, the Seasonal Influenza Vaccination School Outreach (Free of Charge) Programme was launched in 2018/19 and has been regularised since 2020/21. The Programme covers all the kindergartens, primary and secondary schools in the territory. The Government arranges for a Public-Private-Partnership Team or a Government Outreach Team to provide free SIV service for schoolchildren at participating schools. Schools not participating in the above free-of-charge programme can invite doctors providing outreach vaccination under the Vaccination Subsidy Scheme from the list published on the Centre for Health Protection (CHP)'s website to arrange outreach SIV service at their campus under the Vaccination Subsidy Scheme School Outreach (Extra Charge Allowed). For the current SIV season, around 350 secondary schools, around 630 primary schools and around 890 kindergartens, kindergarten-cum-child care centres and child care centres have enrolled in the above two programmes, accounting for about 70, 95 and 80 per cent of the schools concerned across the territory respectively.

With the DH's publicity effort, the number of students receiving SIV in 2023/24 has significantly increased compared to last year. As at June 2, under the Government Vaccination Programme, about 538 200 doses of SIV have been administered for children aged between 6 months and below 18 years of age, reaching a record high and increased by about 36.9 per cent comparing to last year. The overall vaccine coverage rate has reached 52.9 per cent, which has marked an increase of 13.1 per cent for the same period last year (39.8 per cent).

Arrangement and limitation of live attenuated influenza vaccine (i.e. nasal

vaccine) (LAIV)

According to recommendations of the Scientific Committee on Vaccine Preventable Diseases (SCVPD) under the CHP of the DH, overseas research and clinical experience generally showed that both injectable inactivated influenza vaccines (IIV) and nasal LAIV are safe and both vaccines can offer comparable protection to the receivers. There is no scientific evidence supporting the priority use of nasal LAIV thus far. The DH has been conducting annual survey to gather feedback from enrolled doctors and schools in the school outreach programmes so as to make reference to the preference of participating schools (including receiving injectable IIV or nasal LAIV) when procuring vaccines.

According to the current arrangement under the SIV School Outreach (Free of Charge) Programme, kindergarten and child care centres can choose to receive injectable IIV or nasal LAIV. Sufficient vaccines have been provided to those kindergartens and child care centres which chose nasal LAIV.

Also, kindergarten, child care centres, primary and secondary schools can discuss with outreach doctors on the provision of injectable IIV or nasal LAIV during the Vaccination Subsidy Scheme School Outreach (Extra Charge Allowed) activities. Parents can also arrange subsidised SIV at clinics of private doctors under the Vaccination Subsidy Scheme (VSS) for children and adolescents aged six months to less than 18 years. Private doctors enrolled in the VSS can also decide to use injectable IIV or nasal LAIV.

In fact, only about a quarter of the kindergartens and child care centres participated in the SIV School Outreach (Free of Charge) Programme chose to use nasal LAIV. Based on past experience, the schools and healthcare providers participating in the outreach program will consider factors such as parental preference, side effects and contraindications of influenza vaccines when selecting the vaccines provided for outreach vaccination activities.

The spokesman reiterated that persons suitable for receiving IIV and LAIV vaccine are different. There are more restrictions for receiving nasal spray vaccines with more points to note, and the shelf-life is also shorter. Nasal LAIV are not applicable to persons who are pregnant, immunocompromised or with other contraindications, e.g. children 2 years through 4 years who have asthma or who have had a history of wheezing in the past 12 months; and concomitant aspirin or salicylate-containing therapy in children and adolescents.

The seasonal influenza vaccines for this season will be expired starting from July this year and the 2024/25 SIV programmes is expected to start in September. The DH will formulate the implementation details for the 2024/25 season, including the best mode of operation and types of vaccine to be provided, with reference to survey results against schools and doctors participating in the school outreach programmes of 2024, and latest recommendations and experience of SCVPD and health authorities of other areas.

Land and Development Advisory Committee holds meeting

At its meeting today (June 3), the Land and Development Advisory Committee was briefed by the Development Bureau (DEVB) on the Government's efforts to streamline development-related administrative processes, as well as the strategies and initiatives to promote the adoption of advanced construction technologies in the construction industry.

Members welcomed the Government's efforts in streamlining development-related administrative procedures. In particular, they highly appreciated the DEVB's initiative to promulgate a circular by the third quarter of 2024 to institutionalise the policy direction of adopting a facilitating and collaborative mindset in processing development-related applications. Guiding principles and good practices would also be provided to relevant bureaux and departments (B/Ds) for their reference in improving their practices. While noting that more measures would be required to cultivate a customer-oriented culture, Members considered that the new circular was a significant step forward to drive cultural change in approving B/Ds. They appreciated that the proposed circular had addressed common issues of concern faced by the industry, for instance, by requiring B/Ds to give specific reasons of rejection of proposals and suggest solutions to address B/D's requirements. Members suggested various means to ensure proper implementation of the circular, for instance, formulation of clear guidelines to frontline officers, ongoing evaluation and monitoring, effective communication with industry stakeholders and timely escalation to resolve problems, and sharing of successful experience. The Government would take into account Members' views and continue working with the industry and other relevant stakeholders to keep the administrative procedures under review and identify further rooms for improvement as necessary.

Members welcomed the Government's work to promote the adoption of advanced construction technologies, including Modular Integrated Construction (MiC), construction digitalisation such as adoption of Building Information Modelling (BIM) and enhancing applied research and development (R&D), in the construction industry. While sharing the vision of growing the MiC sector as an industry, Members acknowledged that the initiatives would assist in enhancing productivity and efficiency of the construction industry, as well as promoting the development of the supply chain of MiC modules by utilising Hong Kong's strengths in quality assurance, certification and marketing, as well as capitalising on cooperation with the Mainland, in particular in the Greater Bay Area. Members made various suggestions, including updating of standards and practices, enhancing collaboration with industry partners both in Hong Kong and outside Hong Kong, promoting wider adoption of MiC, establishing a Manufacturer Certification Scheme, increasing the cost-effectiveness of adopting MiC in individual projects, enhancing procurement

approaches, strengthening R&D and other support for the construction industry, including sharing of successful experience and training. The Government would take into account Members' views in promoting the use of advanced construction technologies.

Temporary closure of Police Museum

Due to facility damage caused by fallen trees today (June 3), the Police Museum at 27 Coombe Road, the Peak, Hong Kong will be temporarily closed from tomorrow for urgent repair works until further notice.

For enquiries, please call the museum at 2849 7019.

Launch of Hospitality Campaign (with video)

The Secretary for Culture, Sports and Tourism, Mr Kevin Yeung attended the launch of the Hospitality Campaign today (June 3) with representatives from the Education Bureau, the Home Affairs Department, the Information Services Department, the Radio Television Hong Kong as well as the Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTB), the tourism and related sectors, the education sector and the districts, to jointly promote hospitality and reinforce Hong Kong's brand as the best tourism destination.

Mr Yeung said, "The Culture, Sports and Tourism Bureau had already started discussions and preparations to promote hospitality with relevant policy bureaux and departments as well as HKTB since early this year to encourage active involvement of all sectors in the community. With the Government's series of hospitality promotions, I hope that all sectors in the community can work together to display the spirit of hospitality and warmly receive visitors to Hong Kong with a view to strengthening Hong Kong's position as the best tourist destination."

He also expressed gratitude to the tourism and related sectors for their unflinching support in continuously improving service quality and launching various activities in conjunction with the Hospitality Campaign in order to create synergy and promote Hong Kong's reputation as a hospitable city.

To echo the Hospitality Campaign, the Education Bureau will provide schools with a series of learning and teaching resources and related

information, and encourage schools to actively plan and promote activities related to the theme of courtesy, so as to further enable students to be courteous with others. The Home Affairs Department will also assist in promoting messages on hospitality and fostering a friendly and courteous atmosphere in the community through organising community involvement activities in various districts.

HKTB will also launch its new promotion on hospitality on the theme of "Let's Go the Extra Mile", to encourage both frontline staff of the industries and members of public that everyone could demonstrate good hospitality by going a little step forward.

Officials of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government attending the launch today also included the Acting Secretary for Education, Mr Sze Chun-fai; the Commissioner for Tourism, Ms Vivian Sum; Director of Information Services, Mrs Apollonia Liu; Director of Broadcasting, Mr Eddie Cheung; and Deputy Director of Home Affairs, Ms Eureka Cheung.