

LCQ5: Enhancing the competitiveness and attractiveness of the capital market

Following is a question by the Hon Robert Lee and a reply by the Acting Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury, Mr Joseph Chan, in the Legislative Council today (April 10):

Question:

There are views that in order to enhance the global competitiveness and attractiveness of Hong Kong's capital market, the Government and regulatory bodies have to adopt a multi-pronged approach, including taking forward reforms, exploring new markets and promoting diversified development of the market. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it will urge the Hong Kong Exchanges and Clearing Limited (HKEX) to actively study the cancellation of the "board lot" requirement and review the fees and charges related to board lots, and to study with the Mainland regulatory authorities the lowering of income tax levied on dividends and bonuses for investors who engage in southbound trading under the Southbound Stock Connect, so as to attract the flow of Mainland capital into Hong Kong stocks;

(2) whether it will explore with HKEX improvements to the delisting mechanism, including not taking a hard line on listed enterprises undergoing business change or transformation or making hasty decisions to cancel their listings, with a view to assisting such enterprises in maintaining their avenues for financing, and draw reference from the practices in overseas countries to launch a Hong Kong version of the over-the-counter trading platform, so that stocks of delisted enterprises can still be tradable; if not, of the reasons for that; and

(3) of the new measures in place to attract the flow of capital into Hong Kong from emerging market countries with good potentials and relatively less contact with Hong Kong previously, and promote reciprocal investment and financial market co-operation, including the development of more bond products dovetailing with the characteristics of emerging market countries, exchange traded fund cross-listings and precious metals products, thereby opening up new opportunities for Hong Kong's financial services sector?

Reply:

President,

The Government is committed to driving the Hong Kong Exchanges and Clearing Limited (HKEX) and the Securities and Futures Commission (SFC) to

continuously enhance the listing platform, so as to attract different types of enterprises as well as investors from the Mainland and overseas to participate in investment and fundraising/financing activities in Hong Kong, thereby exemplifying Hong Kong's function as an international fundraising/financing centre and facilitating its diverse and sustainable development.

In consultation with the SFC and HKEX, my reply to the three parts of the question is as follows:

(1) The securities market currently uses "lot" as a single trading unit, and the number of shares per "lot" is determined by the issuer. We are aware of views of the market that the current arrangement lacks consistency and may pose obstacles to retail investors' entry into the market. On the other hand, some hold the views that the current arrangement has been widely accepted by the market and issuers also have mechanisms in place to adjust the lot size through stock splits, mergers, etc. Therefore any fundamental changes to the trading mechanism will have great impact on investors, intermediaries, and other service providers such as custodians. In this respect, HKEX will comprehensively examine the stock trading unit arrangement and related market impact, and review relevant matters including the board lot arrangement. Since HKEX and the SFC are currently conducting a review of the stock bid-ask spread and a determination on both the trading unit and the bid-ask spread will affect the market trading mechanisms, HKEX will firstly present the review outcome of the bid-ask spread for market consultation in the second quarter of 2024, and commence the examination of the trading unit as the next step.

On mutual access between the Hong Kong and Mainland financial markets, the Government and regulators have maintained close communication with relevant Mainland authorities and institutions to continuously deepen the interaction and integration of the capital markets of the two places. With the strong support of the Central People's Government, a number of enhancement measures and new products were introduced under the mutual market access programme in 2023, including the expansion of eligible stocks under Stock Connect, introduction of Northbound trading of Swap Connect, etc. On this basis, we will continue to explore with the Mainland arrangements for further expanding and enhancing the mutual access mechanisms and study recommendations for facilitating two-way capital flows between the two places, including the feasibility of enhancing relevant tax arrangements. Specific measures will be announced as and when they are ready.

(2) Apart from striving to enhance the breadth and depth of the securities market, we also attach great importance to improving the quality of listed issuers with a view to safeguarding the interest of investors. The purpose of HKEX's existing delisting mechanism is to execute in a systematic manner timely delisting of issuers that no longer meet the continuing listing criteria, and to incentivise suspended issuers to act promptly towards resumption by addressing the fundamental issues involved in the suspension of the trading of their securities. If HKEX considers that an issuer fails to meet the continuing listing criteria after comprehensive consideration, it

will suspend the relevant share trading in accordance with the Listing Rules and issue resumption guidance to the issuer. It will give the issuer 18 months to re-comply with the relevant requirements. If the issuer fails to meet the resumption conditions within the time limit (e.g. business volume still not meeting the minimum requirements, audited financial results not released, internal controls found to be seriously inadequate, etc.), the Listing Division of HKEX will recommend that the Listing Committee consider delisting the issuer's shares to maintain the reputation of the Hong Kong market. HKEX understands that the economic situation in the region is currently in the cycle of adjustments, and will make a comprehensive assessment having regard to the individual circumstances of issuers when enforcing relevant provisions.

The transfer of shares of delisted companies (i.e. transferring shares of unlisted companies over the counter) is governed by the relevant corporate laws of the place where the relevant companies are registered as well as the companies' articles of association. If a listed company's listing status is involuntarily revoked, its delisted shares are deemed to be no longer suitable for trading by general investors on a recognised exchange. Although such shares cannot be traded in the securities market, transactions can still be completed in the form of share transfers in accordance with the existing legal framework and execution mechanism. We, in collaboration with HKEX, will continue to monitor market developments and relevant situations.

(3) The Government, the SFC and HKEX are committed to attracting companies of different sizes and with growth potential from around the world (including emerging markets along the Belt and Road Initiative such as the Middle East and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)) to list and raise funds in Hong Kong for business expansion. Notably, HKEX signed a memorandum of understanding with the Saudi Tadawul Group and the Indonesia Stock Exchange in 2023 respectively, exploring co-operation opportunities such as cross listings in the two places, joint product development, etc. HKEX also included the Saudi Exchange and the Indonesia Stock Exchange onto its list of recognised stock exchanges, allowing companies listed on their main boards to apply for secondary listing in Hong Kong. The SFC authorised a number of new types of exchange-traded funds (ETFs), including Asia's first and the world's largest ETF investing in Saudi Arabia listed stocks as well as the first batch of active ETFs which adopt the strategy to sell covered call options. These ETFs were listed in Hong Kong in November 2023 and February 2024 respectively, offering more choices to investors. The SFC and HKEX will continue to enrich the product ecosystem in Hong Kong's securities market, meeting investors' diverse investment needs and bolstering the local financial services industry in exploring new opportunities.

To further promote Hong Kong's fundraising platform to overseas enterprises and capital, HKEX is preparing for various major promotion activities in the coming year, including jointly organising different thematic flagship summits with organisations in the Middle East and Southeast Asia. It will also participate in different outreach activities, expanding and deepening the coverage of overseas markets as well as introducing the advantages of Hong Kong's listing platform through thematic speeches, forum

exchanges and roadshow events. The SFC is also actively exploring possible co-operation arrangements in the asset management sector with regulators in the Middle East and ASEAN markets. It supports Hong Kong's fund managers to actively explore distributing their funds to relevant markets through different channels, thereby seizing the opportunities of business expansion while facilitating the local asset management sector to diversify capital sources and investor base.

Meanwhile, the Government will strengthen external promotion efforts in the coming year to publicise the latest developments and opportunities in the various financial services sectors (including the securities market) in Hong Kong. We will continue to provide assistance to interested enterprises through the Office for Attracting Strategic Enterprises, Invest Hong Kong, and Economic and Trade Offices in the Mainland and overseas, as well as organise international financial mega events to strengthen networking and tell the good stories of Hong Kong.

Thank you, President.

Health Bureau appoints Commissioner for Chinese Medicine Development (with photo)

The Health Bureau (HKB) announced today (April 10) the appointment of Dr Vincent Chung Chi-ho as the Commissioner for Chinese Medicine Development (C for CMD) for a three-year term with effect from May 20, 2024, subsequent to an open recruitment exercise.

Dr Chung is a registered Chinese medicine practitioner of the Chinese Medicine Council of Hong Kong (CMCHK), and currently holds the position of Associate Professor at the Jockey Club School of Public Health and Primary Care within the Faculty of Medicine at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. He obtained Bachelor's degrees in Chinese Medicine and Biomedical Science from the Hong Kong Baptist University, a Master's degree in Evidence-Based Health Care from the University of Oxford in the United Kingdom as well as a PhD in Public Health from the Chinese University of Hong Kong. His research focuses on interdisciplinary studies in healthcare service, public health, and policies pertaining to the delivery of integrated Chinese-Western medicine services, with a publication record of over 170 articles in international peer-reviewed academic journals. Additionally, he has served as a member of advisory bodies such as the Chinese Medicine Development Committee and the CMCHK, providing recommendations to the Government on strategies and regulatory matters for promoting the development of Chinese medicine (CM) in Hong Kong.

A spokesman for the HHB said, "Dr Chung is familiar with the development of CM and public health policies, and at the same time possesses rich experience in areas such as promotion of CM, clinical research on integrated Chinese-Western medicine as well as research on public healthcare and services. Dr Chung will lead the Chinese Medicine Unit (CMU) of the HHB to strenuously engage and maintain close connection with stakeholders of the CM sector to jointly formulate the CM Development Blueprint, which will map out the visions and strategies for the way forward with a view to optimising the top-tier design at the policy level. He will also oversee policy issues relating to the development of the Chinese Medicine Hospital of Hong Kong and the Government Chinese Medicines Testing Institute as well as aspects including CM services, profession, industry, education, research and public education to drive the all-round high-quality development of CM in Hong Kong.

"Meanwhile, the Government will continue to hold on to the unique advantages of the CM in Hong Kong and leverage the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region's distinctive strengths of having strong support of the motherland and close connectivity to the world under 'one country, two systems'. The Government will work hand in hand with the CM sector to enable Hong Kong to play a more significant role under the construction of the Chinese medicine highlands in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, thereby contributing to the overall development of CM in the country and assisting the national drive for CM to go global."

Established in 2018, the CMU takes forward the overall planning and co-ordination work for the development of CM in Hong Kong at the policy level. To further push forward the CM development in Hong Kong on all fronts, the Government has been enhancing the functions of the CMU starting from 2023-24, including the creation of a dedicated post of the C for CMD and the recruitment of additional non-directorate supporting manpower with CM professional background.



LCQ4: Link for cross-border QR payment between Hong Kong and Thailand

Following is a question by the Hon Chan Pui-leung and a reply by the Acting Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury, Mr Joseph Chan, in the Legislative Council today (April 10):

Question:

The Hong Kong Monetary Authority and the Bank of Thailand (BOT) launched the FPS x PromptPay Link for cross-border QR payment between Hong Kong and Thailand (the payment connectivity initiative) in December last year. Travellers from Thailand and Hong Kong can make retail payments by using the relevant mobile payment applications to scan the FPS QR codes displayed by Hong Kong merchants and the PromptPay QR codes displayed by Thai merchants respectively. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the number of Thai merchants providing the relevant payment means and the transaction amount involved since the implementation of the payment connectivity initiative; the estimated growth in the number of such merchants and the transaction amount this year;

(2) as it is learnt that under the payment connectivity initiative, Hong Kong travellers in Thailand can only make payments by scanning the QR codes provided by five designated Thai banks, while Thai travellers in Hong Kong can only make payments by using the payment applications of three designated Thai banks, whether the authorities will discuss with BOT an increase in the numbers of Thai banks and relevant operators participating in the payment connectivity initiative, so as to attract more travellers to use the payment means; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(3) as it has been reported that the number of Hong Kong travellers to Thailand is increasing but not many of them use the means of payment connectivity, of the authorities' measures in place to step up efforts to publicise the payment means?

Reply:

President,

The Government is committed to promoting the development of the electronic payment (e-payment) and providing the public with safe, efficient, convenient and diversified e-payment options by enhancing financial infrastructure and implementing a robust regulatory regime. Hong Kong has a well-developed e-payment ecosystem with a number of non-cash payment options available to the public.

In September 2018, the Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA) launched the Faster Payment System (FPS) to support safe, convenient and efficient retail payments. The Government and the HKMA are committed to expanding the application of FPS, which has now expanded from person-to-person transactions to merchant payments, top-up transactions, government bill payments, etc.

On December 4, 2023, the HKMA and the Bank of Thailand (BOT) launched the FPS x PromptPay Link for cross-border QR payment. Visitors from Thailand and Hong Kong are able to make retail payments by using mobile banking or e-wallet applications that support the service to scan the Hong Kong FPS QR code and Thai PromptPay QR code displayed by merchants respectively, providing visitors from both places with a safe and convenient cross-border retail payment means.

In consultation with the HKMA, my reply to the three parts of the question is as follows:

(1) Through the FPS x PromptPay Link, visitors from Hong Kong may now make payments via FPS at around 8.7 million merchants in Thailand, including large shopping malls, department stores, supermarkets, duty-free shops, restaurants, public transport, etc.

In Thailand, the average transaction amount under the FPS x PromptPay Link is currently below HK\$200, such as payments for restaurants and retail stores, convenience stores, coffee shops, etc, and the usage is particularly significant during weekends and long holidays. There are also some transactions of medium to high value, such as payments for high-end restaurants, dental care and golf classes, with the highest single transaction amount reaching nearly HK\$10,000.

The HKMA and the BOT will continue to encourage more merchants in Hong Kong and Thailand to participate in the FPS x PromptPay Link, with a view to providing greater convenience to visitors from both places.

(2) At present, the participating institutions of the FPS x PromptPay Link are major financial institutions in Hong Kong and Thailand. Regarding payments made by Hong Kong visitors in Thailand, FPS users of seven local banks and two store value facility (SVF) operators (Note 1) can now scan the PromptPay payment codes provided by five participating banks in Thailand (Note 2) to make payments, covering over 90 per cent of the PromptPay merchants in Thailand. As for Thai visitors making payments in Hong Kong, PromptPay users of three major retail banks in Thailand (Note 3) can now make payments at all merchants in Hong Kong that provide FPS payment code.

Financial institutions in the two places will decide whether to participate in the FPS x PromptPay Link having regard to factors including their respective development directions and resource deployment. The HKMA and the BOT will continue to actively promote the FPS x PromptPay Link to banks and SVF operators in the two places. It is anticipated that more financial institutions will join in the future.

(3) The FPS x PromptPay Link has been well received by Hong Kong visitors to Thailand since its launch. According to the figures from Thailand, in January 2024, Hong Kong ranked the third in terms of payment volume in cross-border QR code payments in Thailand, only after Malaysia and Indonesia (Note 4) which had far more visitors to Thailand than Hong Kong.

To further promote the FPS x PromptPay Link, the HKMA has launched a series of publicity campaigns, including on-site filming of education videos in Thailand to introduce the procedure of using FPS and points-to-note; organising targeted promotion during the peak seasons for travel including the Christmas in 2023 and the Lunar New Year in 2024; producing short animations and print advertisements for publicising on the dedicated pages of the HKMA and the travel-related social media platforms before and after the Easter and the Thai New Year holidays in 2024. Hong Kong financial institutions participating in the FPS x PromptPay Link have also introduced different promotional offers, such as cash rebates, lucky draws and exchange rate discounts, with a view to attracting Hong Kong visitors to use the cross-border QR code payment service in Thailand.

In addition, the HKMA and the Hong Kong Interbank Clearing Limited, which is responsible for operating the FPS system, have provided information and frequently asked questions regarding the FPS x PromptPay Link on their respective websites, enabling the public to have an in-depth understanding of the detailed arrangement as well as enhancing the public awareness of the service. Thank you, President.

Note 1: Including Bank of China (Hong Kong) Limited, Bank of Communications (Hong Kong) Limited, Bank of East Asia Limited, Citibank (Hong Kong) Limited, Fubon Bank (Hong Kong) Limited, Hang Seng Bank Limited, HKT Payment Limited, Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation Limited and Octopus Cards Limited.

Note 2: Including Bangkok Bank, Bank of Ayudhya, Krungthai Bank, Kasikornbank and Siam Commercial Bank.

Note 3: Including Bangkok Bank, Bank of Ayudhya and Krungthai Bank.

Note 4: In January 2024, the number of visitors from Malaysia and Indonesia to Thailand were around 7 times and 1.5 times than that from Hong Kong respectively.

LCQ2: Strengthening patriotic education

Following is a question by the Hon Kenneth Lau and a reply by the

Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs, Mr Erick Tsang Kwok-wai, in the Legislative Council today (April 10):

Question:

The Patriotic Education Law of the People's Republic of China (Education Law), which took effect on January 1 this year, aims to strengthen patriotic education, as well as inherit and promote the spirit of patriotism. In addition, the 2023 Policy Address has proposed the establishment of a Working Group on Patriotic Education (Working Group) and a Chinese Culture Promotion Office (CCPO) to take forward the relevant education and promotion work. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the Working Group's mode of operation and the details of its activities currently in preparation;

(2) whether CCPO will make good use of the abundant heritage and monument resources in the Northern Metropolis, such as the heritage trail in Sha Tau Kok in commemoration of the War of Resistance and the Cenotaph for Martyrs in Wu Kau Tang, to systematically organise some heritage and monument visits and guided tours of educational significance; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(3) whether it will consider constructing a museum on the history of the Communist Party of China, a museum on the War of Resistance, as well as a dedicated museum that showcases the development and achievements of the country in the Northern Metropolis, and building the Northern Metropolis into a large-scale national education base, so as to better implement the directives and requirements of the Education Law; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

In consultation with relevant bureaux, the consolidated reply to the question raised by the Hon Kenneth Lau is as follows:

As announced by the Chief Executive in the Policy Address last year, the Government will roll out patriotic education, and a Working Group on Patriotic Education (Working Group) will be established under the Constitution and Basic Law Promotion Steering Committee led by the Chief Secretary for Administration. The Working Group will co-ordinate the work of government departments and non-governmental organisations in taking forward national education and dovetailing with the Patriotic Education Law of the People's Republic of China (Patriotic Education Law), with a view to enhancing education on our country's history, culture and current affairs on different fronts, thereby promoting patriotism and ensuring its continuity from generation to generation.

Established on April 8, 2024, the Working Group on Patriotic Education comprises the relevant Directors of Bureaux, Heads of Departments, and

leaders from the relevant sectors of society. To take forward patriotic education in an all-round manner, the Working Group will focus efforts on various key aspects, including school education; local community; history, politics, economy and culture; and media publicity.

The Chief Secretary for Administration will, through the Working Group, provide steer on the work to promote patriotic education, with a view to integrating patriotic education with national security education and Chinese culture education, stepping up promotion efforts at school and community levels, and making good use of various media platforms for publicity purposes, so as to blend patriotic education with citizens' everyday life and continuous learning. Taking into account, with a holistic approach, the current societal situation and the spirit and relevant content of the Patriotic Education Law, the Working Group will formulate the overall plan and strategy to systematically combine efforts of the Government and the community in enhancing the national awareness and sense of patriotism among various sectors of the community and taking forward patriotic education in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR). We are actively making preparations to convene the first meeting of the Working Group as soon as possible. The specific work directions and plans of the Working Group will be announced in due course.

Patriotic education is rich in content, including public education on the history of and Hong Kong's contributions to the War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression (War of Resistance). The HKSAR Government has been attaching great importance to the history in commemorating the War of Resistance to enhance national confidence and patriotism among the general public. On optimising the use of heritage and monument resources, the Hong Kong Museum of Coastal Defence (MCD) under the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) held the "Fight as One: Anti-Japanese Guerrillas" Series Programme in 2023/24, including field visits to the sites of the War of Resistance and war-related historic sites and memorial facilities at Wu Kau Tang and Sha Tau Kok, etc. In future, the Chinese Culture Promotion Office (CCPO) and the MCD under the LCSD will join forces to design and organise guided tours by making use of the historic sites in association with the War of Resistance in the Northern Metropolis, including the Law Uk, currently the Hong Kong Sha Tau Kok Anti-Japanese War Memorial Hall, at Sha Tau Kok that was used by the Hong Kong and Kowloon Independent Brigade of the East River Column as its base of operations and transportation checkpoint, as well as the Memorial Monument for Martyrs during World War II at Wu Kau Tang. Such guided tours are expected to commence in September this year. Besides the Northern Metropolis, the CCPO and the MCD will also explore the use of historic sites associated with the War of Resistance and related memorial facilities in Sai Kung, Yuen Long and Central Districts to plan further guided tours to boost the understanding and awareness of the War of Resistance history in the public.

To enhance public understanding of the history of the War of Resistance, the MCD, which will be converted as the Hong Kong Museum of the War of Resistance and Coastal Defence in September this year, will organise a series of educational and extension programmes related to the War of Resistance for

schools and the public to further promote the awareness of the history as well as the significant contributions by the Hong Kong and Kowloon Independent Brigade of the East River Column during the war.

In addition, the Chief Executive announced in the Policy Address last year that the Government would set up a museum to showcase the development and achievements of our country, covering areas such as its history (including the history of the Chinese Communist Party), politics, economic development and culture. The LCSD is currently working with the Development Bureau and other related departments to explore and identify an ideal site for the new museum. When designing and developing the exhibition contents, the CCPO will consult relevant Mainland authorities or museums, and draw reference from their views and information. We will also consult the opinions of the Legislative Council and various stakeholders on the general planning and future development of museums in Hong Kong.

Regarding the suggestion of building a "national education base" in the Northern Metropolis, we learn that the key functions of the base proposed by the Hon Kenneth Lau include the provision of a national education platform, teacher training, and exchange activities to promote national education, etc. National education and national security education have already incorporated elements and spirit of patriotic education, which form an integral part of school curriculum. The Education Bureau has been adopting a multi-pronged and co-ordinated approach to support and encourage primary and secondary schools to deliver national education and national security education, and dovetail such education with the content of the Patriotic Education Law. Among others, teacher training has been strengthened, such as regularly providing teaching resources on current affairs and history of the country, national affairs education for students has been enhanced, and Chinese culture immersion activities have been organised, with the aim of nurturing students from young as good citizens with a sense of belonging to our country. Besides, various patriotic groups have been staging exhibitions, setting up exhibition venues and organising different forms of activities on their own initiative to support the various sectors in the community in taking forward national education. One example is the Patriotic Education Centre established by the Hong Kong Federation of Education Workers. We will encourage various sectors of the community to better utilise these resources to enrich the content and experience of patriotic education.

As remarked by President Xi Jinping, "patriotism is the core of our national spirit, and is the spiritual bond of the Chinese nation's unity, struggle and self-reliance". Patriotic education is not a matter for an individual person or organisation. It requires the concerted efforts and active participation of various sectors of the community to get it done well. Truly, unity is strength. The newly established Working Group on Patriotic Education will closely liaise and work with the relevant bureaux and departments to launch a series of patriotic education activities and encourage various sectors of the community to organise pertinent activities on their own initiative, with a view to creating a patriotic atmosphere in a united manner and contributing to the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.

Thank you, Mr President.

[Transcript of remarks by CS, SCST, S for Health and SHYA after LegCo Ante Chamber exchange session \(with photos/video\)](#)

The Chief Secretary for Administration, Mr Chan Kwok-ki, together with the Secretary for Culture, Sports and Tourism, Mr Kevin Yeung, the Secretary for Health, Professor Lo Chung-mau, and the Secretary for Home and Youth Affairs, Miss Alice Mak, met the media after attending the Ante Chamber exchange session at the Legislative Council this morning (April 10). Following is the transcript of remarks:

Reporter: Can you recap in English how the Government is assisting those affected in the Jordan fire? There have been two fires in a row, how will the Government prevent similar incidents from happening again? And Mr Lo, can you tell us why there is a need to provide a cross-border ambulance service? What is the importance of this service?

Chief Secretary for Administration: It's very sad to learn that the fire case this morning led to five people being killed, and more than 20 being injured. I feel very sad. The Fire Services Department, upon receiving the call, has immediately arrived at the scene to put out the fire. We have opened some centres for those affected, and our Care Team (District Services and Community Care Team) members and also the District Officer are there to assist them. The Social Welfare Department has sent officers there as well to see how we can help them. The Fire Services Department and the Police are investigating the reason why (the) serious fire happened this morning. Later, the Fire Services Department will hold a press (stand-up) to explain further details.

Secretary for Health: With the development of the Greater Bay Area and the increase in the number of Hong Kong citizens travelling, residing, retiring and living in the Greater Bay Area, we see an increasing demand for cross-boundary healthcare services, including the need for some patients who are in-patients in hospitals to be transported across the boundary. The current arrangement is far from satisfactory in the sense that patients have to change between two ambulances at the boundary area. This sometimes would cause concerns over the quality of care and the safety of patients, so what we are now planning and will soon implement is point-to-point transfer between dedicated hospitals in Hong Kong and those in Shenzhen and Macao.

The new arrangement under the pilot scheme will first involve patients coming back from Shenzhen or Macao to Hong Kong. That is point number one. Secondly, it will only be implemented between dedicated hospitals. This time, the pilot hospitals will be the University of Hong Kong-Shenzhen Hospital which we are all familiar with in Shenzhen, and the government hospital in the peak area (Conde S. Januario Hospital) in Macao.

We will have to make sure that all arrangements, including vehicles, medical personnel, machines and also the medicine and drugs to be used in the ambulance, are legal for use across the boundary. We are making all these logistical arrangements. We have also got the endorsement from the Medical Council (The Medical Council of Hong Kong) regarding the limited registration for those cross-boundary doctors coming from Macao and Shenzhen. We will soon be running a trial run, probably at the end of this month or in early May, in order to make sure that everything is smooth before we implement this. Thank you.

(Please also refer to the Chinese portion of the transcript.)

