

WHO Regional Director visits Department of Health and Centre for Health Protection (with photos)

The World Health Organization (WHO) Regional Director for the Western Pacific, Dr Takeshi Kasai, today (May 2) visited the Department of Health (DH) and the DH's Centre for Health Protection (CHP) to learn about the department's various areas of work and public health programmes as well as to exchange views on priorities for the WHO's work in the Western Pacific.

At a meeting this morning, Dr Kasai was first briefed by the Director of Health, Dr Constance Chan, and the Controller of the CHP, Dr Wong Ka-hing, on the work of the DH. In particular, Dr Kasai learnt about the DH's epidemiological investigations and disease control measures in response to the recent outbreak of measles infection at Hong Kong International Airport.

Dr Kasai noted that the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region recently launched a Preparedness and Response Plan for Dengue Fever to provide a systematic framework to respond with agreed and co-ordinated efforts among different government departments and relevant organisations with a view to reducing the public health impact of dengue fever on the Hong Kong population. He also noted that the DH is actively enhancing seasonal influenza vaccination programmes for the coming winter influenza season.

Furthermore, Dr Kasai introduced the White Paper issued by the WHO's Western Pacific Regional Office (WPRO) last month, which outlines a series of priorities for the WHO's work in the Western Pacific including health security, non-communicable diseases (NCDs) and ageing, and climate change and the environment. He exchanged views with DH representatives on the White Paper, particularly on priorities and concerns specific to Hong Kong, as well as how Hong Kong can contribute its expertise and experience to addressing shared regional challenges.

Accompanied by Dr Chan and Dr Wong, Dr Kasai visited the CHP this afternoon. He toured the Central Notification Office and was briefed by the Surveillance and Epidemiology Branch on their work in monitoring intelligence related to communicable diseases in Hong Kong through notification mechanisms. He then visited the Emergency Hotline Centre to learn more about its health-related enquiry service during public health emergencies.

Proceeding to the Emergency Response Centre under the Emergency Response and Information Branch, Dr Kasai was briefed on the centre's operation and role in the event of major public health emergencies. He also visited the simulation ward of the Infection Control Branch, which was purpose-built for providing infection control training for health care professionals.

