



**For information
on 21.10.2021**

AOM-P1701

Hospital Authority

The Chief Executive's 2021 Policy Address

Advice Sought

Members are invited to note for information the relevant contents of the Chief Executive's 2021 Policy Address (**Annex 1**) and new initiatives outlined in the Policy Address Supplement (**Annex 2**) that are related to the Hospital Authority (HA) or healthcare in general.

Background

2. The Chief Executive of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region announced her 2021 Policy Address on 6 October 2021 (full version available for public access on the Internet <http://www.policyaddress.gov.hk/>). Extracts of the below Chapters which are relevant to healthcare are provided at **Annex 1**.

- (a) Chapter I on Foreword: A New Era;
- (b) Chapter IV on New Impetus to the Economy: Integration into the National Development;
- (c) Chapter VI on Building a Liveable City;
- (d) Chapter VII on Continuously Improving People's Livelihood;
- (e) Chapter VIII on Nurturing Talents and Youth Development; and
- (f) Chapter IX on Emerging from the Epidemic.

3. With the Policy Address being a concise document, the "Policy Address Supplement" (in place of the Policy Agenda booklet in previous years) complements the 2021 Policy Address by outlining the progress made (covering completed initiatives and those that have attained major progress), the challenges faced by Hong Kong, and the new initiatives to be rolled out in the coming year on top of those announced in the 2021 Policy Address. New initiatives in the 2021 Policy Address Supplement that are relevant to healthcare are extracted to the first part of **Annex 2** ("New Initiatives"), while "Progress Made" on health-related initiatives announced since July 2017 are copied at the latter part of **Annex 2**.

4. On 8 October 2021, the Secretary for Food and Health briefed the Legislative Council Panel on Health Services on the new initiatives and the progress of on-going initiatives in respect of health matters set out in the 2021 Policy Address Supplement. The Panel paper is also attached at **Annex 3** for easy reference.

Hospital Authority
AOM/PAPER/1701
15 October 2021

Extracts from the 2021 Policy Address

Chapter I. Foreword: A New Era (extract from the section on paragraph 3)

3. While today's Policy Address will focus on developing and mapping out Hong Kong's future, the 202-page Policy Address Supplement also published today provides a summary, in graphic and text form, of the effectiveness of our policies over the past four years or so to give the public a comprehensive account of our work. Despite the severe and unprecedented challenges faced by the current-term Government, we have maintained the spirit of overcoming all challenges and proactively serving the people, advocating policy breakthroughs and striving to resolve society's problems. Let me give a few examples:

- (i) 96% of over 900 policy initiatives proposed in the past four Policy Addresses have been completed or are progressing on schedule;
- (ii) we have adhered to the philosophy of the financial centre serving the real economy and introduced measures which include the two-tiered profits tax rates regime, enhanced tax deductions for research and development expenditure, and tax concessions to attract specific industries to develop their businesses in Hong Kong; we have issued Government Green Bonds and Silver Bonds, launched a public annuity scheme and revised our listing regime to cater for the needs of new economy enterprises;
- (iii) to nurture talents and promote innovation and technology (I&T), we have increased our recurrent expenditure on education by over \$13 billion and invested over \$130 billion in I&T;
- (iv) we have strived to improve people's livelihood by significantly increasing our recurrent spending on healthcare and social welfare to \$95.9 billion and \$105.7 billion respectively for the current financial year, an increase of 53% and 62% respectively over the past four years;
- (v) we have introduced various initiatives on labour rights and benefits, including extending statutory paid maternity leave from 10 to 14 weeks, progressively increasing the number of statutory holidays to be on par with general holidays, substantially completing the preparatory work for the legislation for abolishing the "offsetting" arrangement under the Mandatory Provident Fund (MPF) system, and enhancing the employment terms and conditions of non-skilled workers engaged under government service contracts; and
- (vi) in the top priority area of housing, the Government has adopted a number of measures. These include tilting towards public housing in land allocation, establishing the housing ladder for home ownership, delinking the price of Home Ownership Scheme flats from market prices, imposing tenancy

controls on subdivided units through legislation, providing cash allowances to eligible public rental housing (PRH) applicants who have been waiting for PRH for a long time, and building transitional housing units. As for land supply, a multi-pronged approach has been adopted to press ahead with the related work at full steam.

Chapter IV. New Impetus to the Economy: Integration into the National Development (extract from the section on paragraphs 55, 59 – 60, 62 – 64)

Developing into an International Innovation and Technology Hub

Land / Infrastructure for I&T (extract from the section on paragraphs 55, 59 – 60)

Science Park

55. Next year marks the 20th anniversary of the Hong Kong Science and Technology Parks Corporation (HKSTPC), the flagship I&T institution in Hong Kong. The Science Park is now home to about 900 technology enterprises and start-ups in areas such as artificial intelligence, life and health, environmental technology, and four unicorns have been incubated therein so far. In the past three years, its tenants/incubatees have raised funds amounting to \$33 billion. It is estimated that for every \$1 invested by the HKSTPC, an external investment of \$13 would be attracted.

Universities' Research Work

59. Our strong research capabilities have all along been well recognised both nationally and internationally. To date, Hong Kong has 16 State Key Laboratories, 6 Hong Kong Branches of Chinese National Engineering Research Centres and 22 Joint Laboratories with the Chinese Academy of Sciences. In recent years, the Central Government has made available quite a number of national research and development projects and funding schemes to researchers in Hong Kong. Hong Kong is blessed with a wealth of talents, with five world top-100 universities and many scholars and experts winning top international and national research awards.

60. To consolidate Hong Kong's leading position in basic research, we have accepted in principle the proposals of the University of Hong Kong (HKU) and The Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK) to provide the two universities with land for research use, including reserving a 4-hectare site currently zoned "Green Belt" at Pokfulam for HKU to construct facilities for deep technology research, as well as supporting CUHK to use a 2.5-hectare site in the vicinity of the CUHK Medical Centre mainly zoned "Government, Institution or Community" to build research facilities and expand the Medical Centre, and at the same time improving the existing public transport interchange and parking facilities at the University Station of the East Rail Line. We will also support The Hong Kong Polytechnic University (PolyU) in exploring the use of its Hung Hom Bay

Campus, which is currently used for self-financing post-secondary education, for academic and research development.

Promoting Research and Development (full section on paragraphs 62 – 64)

62. Hong Kong has a solid foundation to develop into a global research collaboration hub. As a flagship project, the InnoHK research clusters have already attracted world-class universities and research institutes to collaborate with local universities in setting up 28 research laboratories. During my recent visits to some of these laboratories, I was impressed by the passion and perseverance of the research teams in pursuing technological breakthroughs and innovative business opportunities. I strongly believe that these laboratories and talents can help Hong Kong scale new heights in I&T development and further consolidate our position as a hub for global research collaboration.

63. Looking ahead, with the emphasis of the 14th Five-Year Plan on frontier fields such as life and health disciplines, I believe that Hong Kong should better leverage its strengths in life and health sciences to meet the country's needs. We have a solid foundation in research and a good number of world-renowned experts, whose achievements have been widely acclaimed. Our clinical trial centres are recognised by the National Medical Products Administration, and their data which meet the relevant clinical trial standards are also widely recognised by relevant bodies in the United States and the European Union. I now propose the setting up of an InnoLife Healthtech Hub in the HSITP in the Loop, with the 16 life and health-related laboratories in the InnoHK research clusters and the 8 State Key Laboratories in life and health disciplines as the basis, to focus on related research work. I know that quite a number of start-ups and large enterprises in life and health disciplines are interested in gaining a foothold in Hong Kong, so as to leverage our strengths in this area and the market potential of the GBA. The San Tin Technopole will be able to provide land for the relevant research and advanced manufacturing industries.

64. Clinical data, clinical trials and drug registration are some of the key areas essential to the development of life and health technology. To this end, I have asked the Food and Health Bureau (FHB), the Hospital Authority (HA) and the Department of Health (DH) to conduct a comprehensive review of the current practices.

Chapter VI. Building a Liveable City

Smart City (extract from the section on paragraph 112)

112. Rapid progress has been made since the launch of 5G services last year, with network coverage now topping 90%, and even up to 99% in core business districts. According to a report by an international market survey institution this year, Hong Kong ranks first and second in the world in terms of 5G coverage and stability respectively, bringing vast potential for various commercial services and smart city applications. The Government will promote 5G development on various fronts, including releasing more 5G spectrum for auctioning by the end of this month to satisfy the needs of various 5G services in terms of speed, capacity and coverage. Through the Subsidy Scheme for Encouraging

Early Deployment of 5G, we will subsidise more sectors to boost efficiency and productivity by adopting innovative 5G applications such as telemedicine, distance maintenance support and real-time safety monitoring in construction sites.

Chapter VII. Continuously Improving People's Livelihood

(extract from the section on paragraphs 127 – 128 and 130 – 136)

Women Affairs

127. The current-term Government has implemented a number of measures to promote women's development. These measures include extending statutory maternity leave to 14 weeks, strengthening child care services, providing more baby care rooms in government premises, and amending legislation to make discrimination against and harassment of breastfeeding illegal. I am also pleased to see that our efforts in promoting women's participation in public affairs in my term of office are gradually bearing fruit. The percentage of female members in advisory and statutory bodies (ASBs) has reached 35% in June this year, meeting the target set in earlier years.

Strengthening Support for Ethnic Minorities

128. The Government places great emphasis on creating an equitable and caring society for our culturally diverse groups. The current-term Government has implemented around 30 measures to enhance support for ethnic minorities, covering the areas of education, employment support, healthcare, social welfare and social inclusion. As a next step, the Government will set an example by taking the lead in providing ethnic minorities with more employment opportunities.

Public Healthcare System

130. With our anti-epidemic efforts sustained over the past 21 months, all confirmed COVID-19 patients have received timely and proper treatment in hospitals. This is an extraordinary achievement which demonstrates the remarkable efficiency, professionalism and high adaptability of the healthcare system in Hong Kong. That said, there are still inadequacies in our healthcare system. We need to make improvements in multiple aspects in order to tackle the challenges posed to our healthcare services by an ageing population. Among these, there is a pressing need to vigorously promote the development of primary healthcare services and foster medical-social collaboration.

131. I have advocated, as early as in my 2017 Policy Address, the setting up of District Health Centres (DHCs) with a brand new operation mode to promote primary healthcare to relieve the pressure on the HA. After years of hard work, we have and are going to set up DHCs in Kwai Tsing, Sham Shui Po, Wong Tai Sin, Tuen Mun, Southern District and Yuen Long, and DHC Expresses have also been set up in another 11 districts. In parallel, the FHB has proceeded with a comprehensive review on the planning of primary healthcare services and governance framework to formulate a blueprint for the

sustainable development of primary healthcare services in Hong Kong. Enhancement of medical-social collaboration will be a crucial part of the review.

Public Health Strategy

132. The COVID-19 pandemic has presented exceptional challenges to public health authorities around the world. Hong Kong is no exception. We will take stock of the progress made over the past 21 months and consolidate our experience in combating the epidemic. We will also consider strengthening the core functions of the DH in formulating and implementing public health strategies, as well as monitoring and facilitating the development of health technology and the research and development of drug, so as to enhance its capability to cater for the future development of society and public health.

Healthcare Manpower

133. The Government has been adopting a multi-pronged approach to enhance healthcare manpower, including increasing continuously the local healthcare training places offered by the University Grants Committee (UGC)-funded universities and self-financing institutions, and admitting non-locally trained healthcare professionals, with a view to supporting the development of various healthcare services.

134. The healthcare system in Hong Kong is renowned for its quality and reliability. Nevertheless, just like other advanced economies, our healthcare system is facing many challenges, including an ageing population, increasing number of diseases triggered by lifestyle and rising public expectations towards healthcare services. To cope with these challenges, sufficient healthcare manpower is a must. While the number of locally trained places for healthcare professionals will be increased, the LegCo has finished the scrutiny of the relevant amendment bill to enable qualified non-locally trained doctors to practise in Hong Kong, thereby increasing our overall manpower supply of doctors.

135. In addition, we have to strengthen the roles of other healthcare professionals in the local healthcare system, especially in the primary healthcare setting. The FHB will follow up with the statutory Boards and Councils of various healthcare professions on the recommendations in the Report of the Strategic Review on Healthcare Manpower Planning and Professional Development promulgated in 2017, including proposing legislative amendments to allow patients to have direct access to healthcare professional services (e.g. physiotherapy and occupational therapy) without a doctor's referral so as to avoid delay in treatment. Furthermore, to ensure the professional competency of healthcare personnel, we will legislate to make continuing professional education and/or continuing professional development a mandatory requirement for supplementary medical professionals under the relevant ordinance, as well as nurses and dentists. Drawing on the experience in implementing the ongoing voluntary Accredited Registers Scheme for Healthcare Professions, the FHB will also explore the feasibility of introducing a statutory registration regime for those healthcare professionals who are currently not subject to any statutory registration requirements, such as clinical psychologists, speech therapists and dietitians, with a view to protecting public interest.

Chinese Medicine

136. Having affirmed the positioning of Chinese medicine in the development of medical services in Hong Kong, the Government has rolled out various measures, including the construction of the Chinese Medicine Hospital and the Government Chinese Medicines Testing Institute, the provision of Government-subsidised out-patient services and integrated Chinese-Western medicine in-patient services, and the establishment of the Chinese Medicine Development Fund. To promote the long-term development of the Chinese medicine sector, the Government will explore empowering Chinese medicine practitioners to prescribe diagnostic imaging (such as X-ray) and laboratory tests for their patients.

Chapter VIII on Nurturing Talents and Youth Development

Attracting Talents (extract from the section on paragraph 151)

Talent List

151. The first Talent List of Hong Kong was promulgated by the Government in 2018. Upon the completion of a review recently, we decide to add the new professions of “financial professionals in compliance in asset management” and “professionals in Environmental, Social and Governance” to the list. We will also expand the scope of some existing professions to include experts of “medical and healthcare sciences”, “microelectronics”, “integrated circuit design” and “arts technology” and refine the requirements on legal and dispute resolution professionals, with a view to complementing Hong Kong’s future policy direction to develop the key areas of finance, I&T, arts and culture, as well as dispute resolution services. In addition, through the network of our ETOs and Mainland Offices, we will assist relevant bureaux in attracting talents to work in Hong Kong.

Chapter IX. Emerging from the Epidemic (full section of paragraphs 163 – 164)

163. While we have ambitious plans to deliver, our top priority right now remains clear, i.e. we have to do our best to control the epidemic for the community, so that normal cross-boundary flow of people can be resumed as early as possible. Looking back, in our fight against the epidemic over the past 21 months, I and my colleagues, as well as the HA and our expert teams have strictly implemented, with scientific justifications, the strategy of guarding against the importation of cases and the resurgence of local infections. Thanks to the staunch support of the general public, we have weathered four waves of surging cases, and have aptly adjusted our anti-epidemic strategy in light of experience. This strategy has proven effective as Hong Kong’s figures on confirmed and fatal cases are among the lowest in the world. For a city as compact as Hong Kong and with the magnitude of flow of people and goods, every Hong Kong citizen should be given credit for this

achievement. I would like to express my sincere thanks to each and every one who has joined the fight against the epidemic, be they from the civil service, the healthcare and residential care sectors or other trades. Their commitment and dedication have enabled society to maintain normal operation as far as practicable amid the epidemic. What is more, on behalf of the HKSAR, I have to extend our heartfelt gratitude to the Central Government for its care and support for our anti-epidemic work.

164. Last month, the Chief Secretary for Administration led a delegation of the HKSAR Government to attend a meeting on anti-epidemic work with relevant authorities in the Mainland. During the meeting, the two sides explored in detail matters relating to the gradual and orderly resumption of quarantine-free travel between the two places and assessed the possible risks after resumption of quarantine-free travel. The two sides will further study the related details and strive to hold a second meeting as soon as possible. To resume cross-boundary travel, the support of the public is vital. If you, your family or friends have not got a jab yet, please do not hesitate anymore and get vaccinated as soon as possible to prevent yourself and your family from infection, and help create favourable conditions for cross-boundary travel.

Extracts from the 2021 Policy Address - Supplement

Chapter III Together, We Fight the Virus

New Initiatives (full section)

Vaccination

- Press ahead with vaccination of target groups, particularly the elderly over 70 years of age to protect them from serious illness if they were infected and to build a protective shield. (CSB, FHB)
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the vaccination programme to provide a third dose to those who need it to enhance the protection. (CSB, FHB)
- Liaise with the vaccine manufacturers to review the clinical data with a view to lowering the age limit for Sinovac. (CSB, FHB)

Social Distancing

- Facilitate major events to be held safely through adoption of “travel corridors” and “vaccine bubbles” to enable individuals and businesses to return to normal life as far as possible. (FHB, CEDB, HAB)

Boundary Controls

- Seek the Central Government’s support for resuming quarantine-free travel with Mainland in a gradual, orderly and safe manner. (CMAB, FHB)

Chapter V Unlimited Business Opportunities

New Initiatives

Developing Hong Kong into an International I&T Hub

Support for Universities (extract)

- Facilitate expansion of the Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK) Medical Centre and development of additional facilities through the use of the land adjacent to the CUHK Medical Centre, and take this opportunity to improve the existing public transport arrangements and parking facilities. (ITB, DEVB, THB, FHB, EDB)

Promotion of R&D (extract)

- Set up an InnoLife Healthtech Hub in the HSITP at the Lok Ma Chau Loop to focus on R&D of life and health disciplines. (ITB)
- Explore collaboration between the HA and HKSTPC on the use of the HA's clinical data for R&D. (ITB, FHB)

Investing in Capital Works (extract)

- Continue to invest in infrastructure to revive the economy. We are expecting the annual public expenditure in capital works to reach the level of \$100 billion on average in the next few years, covering land and housing supply, healthcare facilities, education, culture and recreation, water supply, drainage and sewerage aspects which are closely related to people's livelihood. (DEVB)

Construction Industry (extract)

- Further promote the adoption of MiC in private residential, public housing, social welfare and hospital projects. (DEVB)

Chapter VI Liveable City

New Initiatives

Food Safety (extract)

- Review the existing regulatory arrangement on composition, and nutrition and health claims for formula products for infants and young children with reference to the latest international development to formulate legislative proposals with a view to further protecting the health of infants and young children and supporting breastfeeding. (FHB)

More Efficient Emergency Service (extract)

- Use virtual reality training system to simulate Hong Kong's mountainous terrain and computer simulation medical training device to simulate the conditions of the injured patients and improve the handling capacity of emergency pre-hospital care by GFS. (SB)

Chapter VII Nurturing Talent

New Initiatives

Using Information Technology to Improve Services (extract)

- Add two new professions of “professionals in compliance in asset management” and “financial professionals in Environmental, Social and Governance” (ESG) to the Talent List of Hong Kong promulgated in 2018, and expand the fields of some existing professions to include experts of “arts technology”, “medical and healthcare sciences”, “microelectronics” and “integrated circuit design”, with a view to stepping up efforts to attract targeted high-quality talents to Hong Kong. (LWB)

Chapter VIII Caring Society

New Initiatives

Primary Healthcare (full section)

District Health Centre

- Take forward the development of DHCs in Wong Tai Sin, Tuen Mun, Southern District, Yuen Long and Tsuen Wan and “DHC Expresses” in the rest of the 11 districts so as to expedite the provision of district-based primary healthcare services. (FHB)

Primary Healthcare Blueprint

- Comprehensively review for better planning various aspects of primary healthcare development with a view to mapping out a blueprint for the sustainable development of primary healthcare services and launching a consultation exercise to listen to the views of stakeholders. (FHB)

Healthcare Services (full section)

Genomic Medicine

- Commence in 2022 the main phase of Hong Kong Genome Project, under which whole genome sequencing and analysis will be conducted for more patients having diseases with genetic predisposition and their family members. Around 50 000 whole genome sequencing will be conducted. Patients will benefit from more accurate diagnosis and more personalised treatment. In the long term, the Project will promote clinical application and innovative scientific research on genomic medicine locally. (FHB)

Antimicrobial Resistance Problem in Hong Kong

- Review the implementation experience of the first Hong Kong Strategy and Action Plan on Antimicrobial Resistance (2017– 2022) and draw up the second plan to map out response strategies for the next phase. (FHB)

Viral Hepatitis

- Implement the Hong Kong Viral Hepatitis Action Plan 2020–2024 to reduce the number of people suffering from the disease. (FHB)

Development of Chinese Medicine (full section)

Chinese Medicine Hospital

- Take forward the preparatory work for the commissioning of the CMH, including signing the service deed, drawing up detailed design, procuring necessary furniture and equipment, and establishing the information technology systems, with a view to commencing services by phases from the second quarter of 2025. (FHB)

Government Chinese Medicines Testing Institute

- Take forward the preparatory work for the setting up of the permanent GCMTI, which is expected to be commissioned in 2025. (FHB)

Integrated Chinese-Western Medicine In-patient Services

- Enhance Integrated Chinese-Western Medicine in-patient services at public hospitals by increasing the number of participating hospitals and disease areas, as well as regularising the services concerned to tie in with the policy direction of the long-term development of CM. (FHB)

Chinese Medicine Development Fund

- Conduct a review on the overall implementation of the \$500 million Chinese Medicine Development Fund with a view to further enhancing the funding schemes and utilisation of resources so as to support the CM sector in a more effective and targeted manner. (FHB)

Prescriptions by Chinese Medicine Practitioners

- Explore empowering CM practitioners to prescribe diagnostic imaging (such as X-ray) and laboratory tests for their patients, with a view to furthering the long-term development of the CM practice sector. (FHB)

Sharing of Healthcare Data (full section)

- Provide a dedicated structure in the HA to facilitate more institutions to explore the potential use of healthcare data for R&D collaboration with the HA, and make use of a wider network of the HA hospitals for research and clinical trial purposes. (FHB)

Professional Development and Regulation of Healthcare Professionals (full section)

- Follow up with the relevant statutory Boards and Councils on various recommendations in the Report of the Strategic Review on Healthcare Manpower Planning and Professional Development promulgated in 2017, and urge them to implement recommendations which have already been discussed at length, including patients' direct access to healthcare professionals (including physiotherapists and occupational therapists) without doctors' referral, and mandatory continuing professional education/continuing professional development. (FHB)
- Modernise the regulatory structure and enhance the professional standard of the relevant healthcare professions by, among others, updating the composition of the statutory regulatory bodies to achieve minimum lay membership of 25%. (FHB)

Social Welfare Planning and Administration (full section)

- Incorporate the planning ratios of long-term residential care, day rehabilitation, pre-school rehabilitation and community support services concerned into the Hong Kong Planning Standards and Guidelines in 2021–22. (LWB)

Progress Made

Chapter III Together, We Fight the Virus

Leadership

- Convened 24 meetings (as at end-August 2021) of high level inter-bureaux/departmental meetings chaired by the Chief Executive to provide steer in fighting the COVID-19 epidemic. (FHB)
- Enlisted a total of 40 experts to advise the Government on various aspects of the anti-epidemic work. (FHB)
- Maintained close liaison with the National Health Commission as well as health authorities in the Guangdong Province and Macao SAR Government. (FHB)

- Made nine public health emergency regulations under the Prevention and Control of Disease Ordinance (Cap. 599) and have them updated regularly to provide legal basis for the anti-epidemic work. (FHB)
- Contained the number of confirmed cases at low levels, 1 609 cases per one million people as at 17 September 2021 versus the global average of 28 908 cases. (Relevant bureaux)
- Adopted a new direction since end-April 2021 to implement social distancing and border control measures with “vaccine bubble” as the basis. (FHB)
- Stemmed out four waves of the epidemic and attained “zero” local cases for most of the days during the past four months. (FHB)
- Maintained vigilance in controlling importation of cases through testing and quarantine taking account of the infection risks of the overseas places. (FHB)
- Tightened vaccination requirements for civil servants, public hospital and elderly home staff, teachers, local air crew, airport staff and container terminal workers to provide better protection for the community. (FHB, THB)

Transparency

- Kept the community abreast of the epidemic situation via over 720 press conferences/daily press briefings; around 5 000 press releases, a dedicated government webpage (coronavirus.gov.hk); and over 7 550 social media posts. (Relevant bureaux)
- Released monthly reports by the Chief Executive on the Government’s work in fighting the epidemic. 20 reports have been issued so far. (CEO)
- Launched the COVID-19 Interactive Map Dashboard in February 2020 to provide the latest information on local COVID-19 cases, attracting more than 56.9 million views as at end-August 2021. (ITB)

Testing, Quarantine, Treatment Facilities and Contact Tracing

- Ramped up testing capacity significantly in public and private sectors to over 100 000 tests per day. (FHB)
- Conducted over 24 million tests or 3.2 million per one million population which put Hong Kong amongst the countries/regions with the highest testing intensity. (FHB)

- Pioneered the use of sewage surveillance to trace COVID-19 transmission in the community. As at end-August 2021, identified 52 cases from nearly 7 000 samples tested. (ENB)
- Issued compulsory testing notices (CTNs) to specified persons/groups, and made restriction testing declaration on premises when it is necessary to conduct testing for persons on the premises to curb community spread. Upon issuance of such CTNs and RTDs, the Hong Kong Housing Authority (HKHA) conducted operations in respect of specified venues in 98 public rental housing (PRH) blocks managed by HKHA as at end-August 2021, while the Home Affairs Department conducted 90 operations for private housing blocks as at end-August 2021. (FHB, HAB, THB)
- Offered free virus testing services since July 2020 to targeted groups that are of higher-risk, high-exposure and from important infrastructure services. Over 2.3 million samples have been tested. (Relevant bureaux)
- Provided convenient voluntary testing services to the public, including free testing through 188 distribution points and 83 collection points to facilitate submission of deep throat saliva specimen (3.76 million specimens tested as at end-August 2021), testing services at 21 community testing centres (1.16 million voluntary tests conducted as at end-August 2021) and 47 General Out-patient Clinics. (FHB)
- Provided over 3 500 propose-built units for quarantine at Penny's Bay in addition to similar facilities at Lei Yue Mun Park. (FHB, DEVB)
- Enhanced service capacity in the Hospital Authority (HA), including deploying around 1 250 Tier-1 isolation beds and retrofitting certain general wards into standard negative pressure wards to provide around 660 Tier-2 isolation beds. (FHB)
- Assisted the HA to establish and expand the Community Treatment Facility (CTF) at the AsiaWorld Expo, and increased the capacity to around 1 900 beds. (FHB, DEVB)
- With financial and technical support by the Central Government, completed the North Lantau Hospital Hong Kong Infection Control Centre with 820 beds in just four months in January 2021. (FHB, DEVB)
- Implemented the Designated Quarantine Hotel Scheme and the Designated Transportation Scheme in December 2020, requiring all arrivals from specified places to undergo compulsory quarantine at designated quarantine hotels. (FHB)

- Set up designated quarantine facilities for residents of residential care homes for the elderly or persons with disabilities, as well as unaccompanied minors who are close contacts of confirmed cases. (FHB, LWB)
- Set up designated quarantine facility at Penny's Bay for foreign domestic helpers returning to Hong Kong. (FHB)
- Launched the Special Chinese Medicine Out-patient Programme in April 2020 to provide free Chinese medicine out-patient rehabilitation services to discharged COVID-19 patients. Over 1 360 patients have joined so far, with more than 9 800 consultations conducted. (FHB)
- Launched the Special Chinese Medicine Programme in January 2021 to provide an option of Chinese medicine services to COVID-19 in-patients at the CTF and the North Lantau Hospital Hong Kong Infection Control Centre. Over 90 patients have joined so far. (FHB)

Vaccination Programme

- Launched the territory-wide COVID-19 Vaccination Programme in February 2021 providing the two vaccines Sinovac and BioNTech to eligible population. The public may receive vaccination in 29 Community Vaccination Centres (CVCs), and more than 2 300 private clinics and 26 designated general out-patient clinics under the HA. Towards the end of September 2021, more than 4.43 million persons have received their first dose (amounting to about 66% of the eligible population) and more than 4.04 million persons (about 60% of the eligible population) have received the second dose. (CSB)
- Conducted outreach operations to 80 organisations and in different districts. About 20 000 persons received their COVID-19 vaccine on these occasions. (CSB)
- Arranged outreach vaccination service at 11 secondary schools for students from 40 schools while students from about 310 schools have been vaccinated through school group bookings at CVCs. Students of 37 special education schools were arranged to receive assessment and vaccination in designated hospitals under the HA. (CSB)
- Started to distribute same day tickets at 24 CVCs to elderly over 70 since 29 July 2021 and gradually extended the arrangement to elderly over 60, students, designated groups and eventually all persons eligible for vaccination. Towards the end of September 2021, about 96 000 same day tickets have been distributed. (CSB)

Cross-boundary Travel

- Launched the Return2hk Scheme in November 2020 to exempt Hong Kong residents returning from Mainland and Macao from compulsory quarantine in Hong Kong, upon fulfilment of all the specified conditions. As at 20 September 2021, about 300 000 passenger trips were made. (CMAB, FHB)
- Launched the Come2hk Scheme on 15 September 2021 to exempt non-Hong Kong residents arriving from Guangdong Province and Macao from compulsory quarantine in Hong Kong, upon fulfilment of all the specified conditions. (CMAB, FHB)

Application of Technology

- Provided online booking services for community testing programme, vaccination programme, and citizens returning to Hong Kong from the Mainland and Macao. (ITB)
- Jointly developed the electronic wristband and StayHomeSafe mobile app with local research and development institutes, universities and start-ups, now used by over 590 000 persons. This is the largest scale of such application in the world. (ITB)
- Launched the LeaveHomeSafe mobile app in November 2020 for the public to record visit history. The number of downloads has exceeded 5.4 million. Over 95 000 public and private venues and around 18 000 taxis have participated. (ITB)
- Developed the Health Code Conversion System for the public to transmit valid negative nucleic acid results from the health code systems of Guangdong and Macao to the electronic health declaration system upon entry into Hong Kong under the Return2hk Scheme and the Come2hk Scheme. (ITB)
- Launched the COVID-19 Electronic Vaccination and Testing Record System for the public to download the electronic vaccination record for free through the “iAM Smart” mobile app. The number of downloads has reached over 1.1 million. (ITB)
- Launched the Public Sector Trial Scheme in 2020 to support product development and application of technologies for prevention and control of the epidemic. 63 projects were approved with total funding of over \$102 million. (ITB)
- Launched in December 2020 an internal information portal designed for contact tracing to link up relevant departments, agencies and existing information systems. (FHB)

- Modernised the HA’s service model, including piloting the use of “HA Go” mobile application to provide telehealth services for suitable patients. Installed network infrastructure at village offices to enable provision of telehealth services for elderly persons living in remote areas. (FHB, ITB)
- Allocated \$513 million under FHB and its Health and Medical Research Fund to support COVID-19 related research projects undertaken by universities. 67 projects have been approved. (FHB)
- Utilised different coating technologies to disinfect buses and train cars and sprayed anti-bacterial and anti-virus films in vehicles or vessels. (THB)
- Launched the Distance Business Programme to support private enterprises to continue business during COVID-19 through adoption of information technology solutions. As at 6 September 2021, approved around 26 000 applications with funding of around \$1.7 billion. (ITB)

Chapter V Unlimited Business Opportunities

Smart City

- Provided data to over 100 researchers in 16 collaboration projects through the Hospital Authority (HA) Data Collaboration Lab since 2019. Launched the Self Services Platform to support further exploration and innovation with healthcare data by local researchers. (FHB)

Chapter VIII Caring Society

Healthcare Services

Primary Healthcare

- Set up the Steering Committee on Primary Healthcare Development and the Primary Healthcare Office in November 2017 and March 2019 respectively to steer the development of primary healthcare services. (FHB)
- Commenced operation of the District Health Centres (DHCs) in Kwai Tsing and Sham Shui Po in September 2019 and June 2021 respectively. Operation service contracts for two more DHCs (Wong Tai Sin and Tuen Mun) have been awarded. (FHB)

- Earmarked sites for setting up DHCs in all other districts and secured the support of the relevant District Councils on the locations of 10 DHCs. (FHB)
- Awarded operation service contracts for “DHC Express” in 11 districts (namely Central and Western District, Wan Chai, Eastern District, Yau Tsim Mong, Kowloon City, Kwun Tong, North District, Tai Po, Sai Kung, Sha Tin and Islands). (FHB)
- Prepared for the launch of the Pilot Public- Private Partnership Programme for DHCs in the Sham Shui Po DHC in the second half of 2021 to provide subsidised medical consultation services to members newly diagnosed with diabetes or hypertension. (FHB)

Prevention and Control of Diseases

- Launched “Towards 2025: Strategy and Action Plan to Prevent and Control Non-communicable Diseases in Hong Kong” in May 2018. (FHB)
- Expanded the Vaccination Subsidy Scheme since the 2018/19 season to cover people aged between 50 and 64, and provided outreach vaccination services for primary school students, increasing the seasonal influenza vaccination uptake rate by 46% when compared with the 2017/18 season. Regularised the School Outreach Vaccination Pilot Programme to cover primary schools, and kindergartens (KGs) and child care centres (CCCs) starting from the 2019/20 and 2020/21 season respectively. (FHB)
- Provided human papillomavirus vaccination to Primary Five female students since the 2019/20 school year. Provided pertussis vaccinations for pregnant women since July 2020. (FHB)
- Launched the Hong Kong Cancer Strategy in July 2019. Launched an online resource hub in July 2020 to provide health information related to cancer. (FHB)
- Adopted a risk-based approach for breast cancer screening, with screening service provided to eligible women aged between 44 and 69 starting from September 2021. (FHB)
- Launched in October 2020 the “Hong Kong Viral Hepatitis Action Plan 2020–2024” with a view to reducing the number of people suffering from viral hepatitis. (FHB)
- Introduced the Smoking (Public Health) (Amendment) Bill 2019 into the Legislative Council (LegCo) in February 2019 to prohibit the import, manufacture, sale, distribution and advertisement of alternative smoking products, including e-cigarettes, heat-not-burn products and herbal cigarettes. (FHB)
- Designated 11 bus interchange facilities located at tunnel portal areas or leading to expressways or tunnels as no smoking areas. (FHB)

Mental Health

- Supported the Advisory Committee on Mental Health to invite proposals on strengthening mental health support in July 2021 with funding from the Beat Drugs Fund. (FHB)
- Expanded the Student Mental Health Support Scheme from 17 schools in the 2017/18 school year to 210 schools in the 2021/22 school year. (FHB)
- Regularised and expanded the Dementia Community Support Scheme to cover all district elderly community centres in 2019. From 2017 to 2020, benefited about 4 700 elderly persons and their carers. (FHB)
- Commenced territory-wide mental health prevalence surveys for completion within 2023 covering children, adolescents and elderly persons to gather mental health related data to facilitate the development of relevant services. (FHB)
- Launched the on-going mental health promotion and public education initiative named “Shall We Talk” since July 2020 to raise public understanding and awareness about mental wellness. (FHB)
- Strengthened multi-disciplinary support for patients with common mental disorder in psychiatric specialist outpatient clinics in five clusters of the Hospital Authority (HA). (FHB)
- Piloted the collaborative care model between paediatrics and child & adolescent (C&A) psychiatry departments by the HA to provide better care management and timely treatment for patients with mild and stable Attention Deficit / Hyperactivity Disorder and strengthened the allied health support services to C&A psychiatric patients. (FHB)
- Increased the capacity of the C&A psychiatric specialist outpatient clinics to provide 1 500 additional new case attendances and provided more personalised and timely multi-disciplinary support services. (FHB)

Development and Positioning of Chinese Medicine

- Established the positioning of Chinese medicine (CM) in the public medical system in Hong Kong and provided subsidies to in-patient and out-patient services offered by the future Chinese Medicine Hospital (CMH); out-patient services offered by the 18 Chinese Medicine Clinics cum Training and Research Centres (CMCTRs); and in-patient services providing Integrated Chinese-Western Medicine treatment in defined public hospitals of the HA. (FHB)
- Established the Chinese Medicine Unit under the Food and Health Bureau for maintaining liaison with the CM sector, as well as co-ordinating and implementing strategies and measures to promote the development of CM. (FHB)

- Allocated resources to construct two flagship infrastructure projects, the CMH and the Government Chinese Medicines Testing Institute (GCMTI): the contracts for operation and construction of the CMH were awarded in June 2021, with a view to launching services in phases from the second quarter of 2025; while the operation of the temporary GCMTI commenced in March 2017, with the permanent GCMTI expected to be completed in 2025. (FHB)
- Provided an annual quota of around 620 000 for subsidised out-patient services (\$120 per visit) in 18 CMCTRs starting from March 2020. (FHB)
- Increased the participating hospitals in the HA's Integrated Chinese-Western Medicine Pilot Programme to eight, covering all seven clusters of the HA. (FHB)
- Rolled out various funding schemes under the \$500 million Chinese Medicine Development Fund, which benefitted different segments of the industry, non-profit-making organisations and academic institutions, with around 3 000 applications approved. (FHB)
- Facilitated the implementation of the streamlined approval procedures to allow Hong Kong registered proprietary CM for external use to be registered and sold in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA), and the arrangement for recruiting Hong Kong CM practitioners by certain GBA public healthcare institutions, as announced in August 2021. (FHB)

Hospital Authority

- Introduced since 2018–19 a triennium funding arrangement to increase the HA's recurrent funding progressively, having regard to population growth and demographic changes. Provided recurrent funding of \$80.7 billion to the HA in 2021–22, representing an increase of 45% over the provision in 2017–18. (FHB)
- Commenced planning for the Second Ten-year Hospital Development Plan at an estimated budget of about \$270 billion by the HA since 2018, with a view to commencing preparatory works gradually by 2026. (FHB)
- Implemented recommendations by the Special Task Group under the HA Board to enhance the HA's administrative efficiency, including streamlining the resource bidding and decision making processes. (FHB)
- Commenced in-patient services at Tin Shui Wai Hospital since November 2018, with 24-hour Accident and Emergency services. (FHB)

Support for Patients in Need

- Commenced services at the Hong Kong Children's Hospital (HKCH) by phases since December 2018 to treat complex, serious and uncommon paediatric cases requiring multi-disciplinary management. (FHB)

- Increased the number of drugs or medical items covered by the Samaritan Fund and Community Care Fund Medical Assistance Programmes safety net, and enhanced the means test mechanisms twice in 2019 and 2021, thereby extending the group of beneficiary and lowering the level of co-payment by patients. (FHB)
- Strengthened support to patients with uncommon disorders through rolling out targeted measures in clinical diagnosis, multi-disciplinary care, introduction of drugs, drug subsidies, public awareness and scientific research and development (R&D). (FHB)
- Set up the Hong Kong Genome Institute in May 2020. The pilot phase of Hong Kong Genome Project commenced in July 2021, targeting participants with undiagnosed genetic diseases and hereditary cancers. (FHB)
- Implemented measures to enhance the HA's cancer diagnosis and treatment services, including recruiting 14 additional Cancer Case Managers (CCM) and expanding the CCM programme to cover gynaecological cancer and haematological cancer patients, serving additional 1 400 new cases; providing additional 6 000 attendances for radiography services; serving around 2 200 additional attendances in oncology at Specialist Outpatient Clinics and Nurse Clinics; and recruiting additional Medical Social Workers to offer psychosocial support to around 5 800 additional attendances, etc. in 2020–21. (FHB)
- Amended legislation in July 2018 to allow paired and pooled organ donations in Hong Kong. The HA launched a pilot Paired Kidney Donation Programme in the fourth quarter of 2018. (FHB)
- Completed public consultation on legislative proposals on advance directives and dying in place in relation to end-of-life care services. Relevant law drafting work is underway. (FHB)

Dental Services

- Launched a three-year programme Healthy Teeth Collaboration in July 2018 and extended it for another three years to provide free dental services for adults aged 18 or above with intellectual disability. As at end-August 2021, about 3 200 persons have benefited. (FHB)
- Implemented an outreach dental programme in Special Child Care Centres (SCCCs) under the Social Welfare Department (SWD) to provide children aged under six with intellectual disability with free on-site dental check-up and oral health education. Up to end-July 2021, about 1 000 pre-school children have received dental check-up and about 200 of them were referred to the Special Oral Care Service at HKCH for follow up treatment. (FHB)

- Set up 23 outreach dental teams in ten non-governmental organisations (NGOs) under the Outreach Dental Care Programme for the Elderly to provide free outreach dental services for elders in residential care homes, day care centres and similar facilities. Up to end-August 2021, the number of attendances was about 281 200. (FHB)
- Expanded the Elderly Dental Assistance Programme to cover elderly persons aged 65 or above receiving the Old Age Living Allowance (OALA), and refined its service scope in February 2019. Implemented further enhancements from July 2021 to include more subsidised items, and to allow elderly persons aged 75 or above who received services under the programme at least five years ago to receive free removable dentures and other related dental services for a second time. Up to end-August 2021, about 46 200 elders have joined the programme. (FHB)

Sustainable Development of Healthcare System

- Employed all qualified local medical graduates by the HA and provided them with relevant specialist training. From 2017–18 to 2020–21, the HA employed around 1 700 local medical graduates. (FHB)
- Facilitated the continuation of specialist training (including Community Medicine, Emergency Medicine, Family Medicine, Internal Medicine, Obstetrics & Gynaecology, Ophthalmology, Paediatrics, Pathology and Psychiatry) of non-locally trained doctors without full registration in Hong Kong through collaboration between the HA and the Hong Kong Academy of Medicine. (FHB)
- Introduced into the LegCo the Medical Registration (Amendment) Bill 2021 to create a new pathway to allow qualified non-locally trained doctors to practise in Hong Kong. Subject to the LegCo's passage of the Bill, a statutory Special Registration Committee will be set up to determine the list of recognised medical qualifications awarded by non- local medical schools. The target is to submit the list to the Registrar of Medical Practitioners (i.e. the Director of Health) for promulgation in the second half of 2022. (FHB)
- Commissioned the University of Hong Kong to conduct Healthcare Manpower Projection 2020 to update the demand and supply projections of 13 healthcare professions to facilitate formulation of relevant manpower policies. The results of the manpower projections of specialist doctors, specialist dentists, registered nurses and enrolled nurses are expected to be available in the fourth quarter of 2021. (FHB)
- Launched in early 2021 a voluntary registration scheme by the Nursing Council of Hong Kong for the development of nursing specialties to pave way for the eventual setting up of a statutory registration system. As at early-September 2021, applications have been open for 12 specialties, with the remaining four expected to be invited from October 2021. (FHB)

- Invited the Supplementary Medical Professions Council and its Boards to follow up on the recommendations of the Report of the Strategic Review on Healthcare Manpower Planning and Professional Development and profession-specific issues, with a view to submitting proposals after consulting their respective professions. The Optometrists Board has launched the mandatory Continuing Professional Development Scheme with effect from 1 July 2021. (FHB)
- Secured in the 2018–19 and 2019–20 legislative sessions the LegCo’s approval for capital works project proposals of about \$2 billion, accounting for 10% of the \$20 billion earmarked for upgrading and improving the healthcare teaching facilities of the University of Hong Kong, the Chinese University of Hong Kong and the Hong Kong Polytechnic University. Funding proposals for two new projects have been submitted within the 2020–21 legislative session, involving approximately \$113 million. (FHB)
- Implemented the Voluntary Health Insurance Scheme (VHIS) in April 2019. As at end-March 2021, the number of VHIS policies reached 791 000. As at end-May 2021, there were 78 Certified Plans, offering 296 products. (FHB)

Enhancing Public Health Regulation

- Passed the Private Healthcare Facilities Bill in November 2018 to implement a new regulatory regime for private hospitals, day procedure centres, clinics and health services establishments to ensure public safety and enhance consumer rights. The licences for all private hospitals and the first batch of licences for day procedure centres took effect on 1 January 2021. (FHB)
- Provided a clear and dedicated regulatory framework on the use of advanced therapy products to safeguard public health and facilitate the relevant scientific development through the Pharmacy and Poisons (Amendment) Ordinance 2020, which came into operation in August 2021. (FHB)

Abbreviations

AEF	Anti-epidemic Fund
C&A	child & adolescent
CCC	child care centre
CCM	Cancer Case Manager
CEDB	Commerce and Economic Development Bureau
CEO	Chief Executive's Office
CM	Chinese medicine
CMAB	Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau
CMCTR	Chinese Medicine Clinic cum Training and Research Centre
CMH	Chinese Medicine Hospital
CSB	Civil Service Bureau
CTF	Community Treatment Facility
CTN	compulsory testing notice
CUHK	The Chinese University of Hong Kong
CVC	Community Vaccination Centre
DEVB	Development Bureau
DH	Department of Health
DHC	District Health Centre
EDB	Education Bureau
ENB	Environment Bureau
ESG	Environmental, Social and Governance
ETO	Economic and Trade Office
FHB	Food and Health Bureau
FSTB	Financial Services and the Treasury Bureau
GBA	Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area
GCMTI	Government Chinese Medicines Testing Institute
GFS	Government Flying Service
HA	Hospital Authority
HAB	Home Affairs Bureau
HKCH	Hong Kong Children's Hospital
HKHA	Hong Kong Housing Authority
HKSTPC	Hong Kong Science and Technology Parks Corporation
HKU	The University of Hong Kong
HSITP	Hong Kong-Shenzhen Innovation and Technology Park
I&T	Innovation and Technology
ITB	Innovation and Technology Bureau
LegCo	Legislative Council
LWB	Labour and Welfare Bureau
MiC	Modular Integrated Construction

MPF	Mandatory Provident Fund
NGO	non-governmental organisation
OALA	Old Age Living Allowance
OPRS	On-site Pre-school Rehabilitation Services
PolyU	The Hong Kong Polytechnic University
PRH	public rental housing
R&D	research and development
SB	Security Bureau
SCCC	Special Child Care Centre
SWD	Social Welfare Department
THB	Transport and Housing Bureau
VHIS	Voluntary Health Insurance Scheme

**For discussion
on 8 October 2021**

**Legislative Council Panel on Health Services
2021 Policy Address
Policy Initiatives of the Food and Health Bureau**

With our anti-epidemic efforts sustained over the past 21 months, all confirmed COVID-19 patients have received timely and proper treatment in hospitals. This is an extraordinary achievement which demonstrates the remarkable efficiency, professionalism and high adaptability of the healthcare system in Hong Kong. That said, there are still inadequacies in our healthcare system. We need to make improvements in multiple aspects in order to tackle the challenges posed to our healthcare services by an ageing population. To safeguard public health and further improve the standard of health services, this term of Government will continue to work in a focused manner and allocate resources to the following areas –

- (a) primary healthcare;
- (b) continuous improvements to the public healthcare system;
- (c) prevention and control of diseases;
- (d) mental health;
- (e) development of Chinese Medicine;
- (f) supporting patients in need;
- (g) sustainable development of healthcare system; and
- (h) supporting the development of life and health technology.

(a) Primary healthcare

Development of District Health Centres

2. In a bid to shift the emphasis of the present healthcare system and people's mindset from treatment-oriented to prevention-focused, the Food and Health Bureau (FHB) is setting up District Health Centres (DHCs) and DHC Expresses in 18 districts progressively with a view to accelerating the provision of district-based primary healthcare services through medical-social collaboration and public-private partnership, which

would in turn enhance the self-care capability of the public and support patients with chronic diseases.

3. After years of hard work, the Kwai Tsing DHC and the Sham Shui Po DHC have commenced operation in September 2019 and June 2021 respectively. The Government has expedited the setting up of DHCs in other districts. While DHCs in Wong Tai Sin, Tuen Mun, Southern District, Yuen Long and Tsuen Wan are expected to commence operation in 2022, suitable sites have also been identified for the setting up of DHCs in the remaining districts. Among others, we have obtained support from the respective District Councils in eight districts (namely Wan Chai, Eastern District, Yau Tsim Mong, Kwun Tong, Tai Po, Sai Kung, North District and Central and Western District). Meanwhile, the Government will set up interim DHC Express in 11 districts in the fourth quarter of 2021, with some of them already commenced services progressively.

4. Currently, DHCs provide screening services and diagnosis of diabetes mellitus and hypertension to members under its Chronic Disease Management Programme. In order to further enhance the measures to manage the chronic disease and alleviating the pressure on the public healthcare system, the Government is actively preparing to implement a Pilot Public-Private Partnership Programme in the Sham Shui Po DHC with a view to launching the Pilot Programme in late 2021.

Primary Healthcare Development Blueprint

5. In the long run, the Government has proceeded with a comprehensive review on the planning of primary healthcare services and governance framework with a view to formulating a blueprint for the sustainable development of primary healthcare services in Hong Kong (the “Blueprint”). The Government aims to launch the consultation exercise for the Blueprint to listen to the views of the stakeholders and implement the recommendations as soon as practicable. We will make reference to international experience by looking into the primary healthcare landscape in different parts of the world and drawing reference from the primary healthcare policy, direction and measures adopted in different places with a view to establishing a primary healthcare system that can improve the health of the public and enhance their quality of life.

6. Under the guidance of the Steering Committee on Primary Healthcare Development, we are exploring the following aspects in the Blueprint:

- (i) Establishment and Restructuring of a District-based, Prevention-oriented Primary Healthcare System
- (ii) Governance Framework of Primary Healthcare Services
- (iii) Manpower and Training of Primary Healthcare Personnel
- (iv) Enhancing Health Surveillance and Health Record Sharing
- (v) Financing of Primary Healthcare Services

7. Among others, we have placed great emphasis on the role of DHCs as district primary healthcare hubs. Through active engagement of NGO partners, DHCs would be able to utilise its community network and resources to promote district-based primary healthcare services that suits the community's needs in a proactive and flexible manner. It will also strengthen medical-social collaboration through a bottom-up approach.

8. As for the review on the governance framework of primary healthcare services, the Government aims to strengthen the planning and coordination of resources, manpower, service structure and service standards, etc., as well as to integrate existing public and private primary healthcare services resources to improve service efficiency and effectiveness. We will consult stakeholders on the Blueprint this year with a view to publishing the Blueprint within the current term of the Government.

(b) Continuous improvements to the public healthcare system

9. The COVID-19 pandemic has presented exceptional challenges to public health authorities around the world. Hong Kong is no exception. We will take stock of the progress made over the past 21 months and consolidate our experience in combating the epidemic. Meanwhile, to maintain the remarkable efficiency, professionalism and high adaptability of the healthcare system in Hong Kong, we need to make continuous improvements in multiple aspects in order to tackle the challenges posed to our healthcare services by an ageing population and the epidemic. On one hand, we will consider strengthening the core functions of the Department of Health (DH) in formulating and implementing public health strategies, as well as monitoring and facilitating the development of health technology and the research and development of drug, so as to enhance its capability to cater for the future development of society and public health. We will also consider the role of the DH and coordination arrangements in the process of reviewing the governance framework and service provision

of primary healthcare services. On the other hand, we will continue to support the Hospital Authority (HA) to expand and upgrade inpatient healthcare services, and develop and make good use of innovative technology to improve efficiency and quality. Besides, we will conduct a comprehensive review on the current practices, together with the HA and the DH, regarding clinical data, clinical trials and drug registration, etc. in order to promote and foster the development of life and health technology.

(c) Prevention and control of diseases

Threat of antimicrobial resistance in Hong Kong

10. As regards the strengthening of disease prevention and control, the Government will review the implementation experience of the first Hong Kong Strategy and Action Plan on Antimicrobial Resistance (2017-2022) and draw up the second plan to map out response strategies for the next phase.

Viral Hepatitis

11. The Hong Kong Viral Hepatitis Action Plan 2020-2024 was promulgated in October 2020 and the Government will actively pursue the action items as set out in the Action Plan to reduce the number of people suffering from the disease.

Breast Cancer Screening Pilot programme

12. The Government has rolled out the Breast Cancer Screening Pilot programme to provide risk-based screening services for eligible women from September 2021, with an aim of detecting early breast cancer in women before any symptoms of breast cancer appear, so that treatment can be carried out early to prevent cancer from getting worse.

(d) Mental health

13. The social unrest in 2019, together with the persisting epidemic since early 2020, have brought different levels of impact and influence on the mental well-being of the people in the community. In the 2020 Policy Address, the Government announced that it would earmark \$300 million under the Beat Drugs Fund for the aims of providing better support to the

needy in the community and raising public awareness of mental health. The Government launched the Mental Health Initiatives Funding Scheme in July 2021, inviting relevant non-governmental organisations and tertiary institutions to submit proposals. It is expected that the approved mental health projects would commence within 2021-22.

(e) Development of Chinese Medicine (CM)

14. The Government has all along been promoting the development of CM in Hong Kong, and affirmed the positioning of CM in the development of medical services in Hong Kong. The Government is constructing Hong Kong's first Chinese Medicine Hospital (CMH), and announced on 22 June 2021 the engagement of the Hong Kong Baptist University as the contractor of the service deed for operation of the CMH. The preparatory work for the commissioning of the CMH has also commenced immediately thereafter, including signing the service deed, drawing up detailed design, procuring necessary furniture and equipment, and establishing the information technology systems, with a view to commencing services by phases from the second quarter of 2025. Furthermore, the Government is also constructing the Government Chinese Medicines Testing Institute (GCMTI), located adjacent to the CMH, to be managed by the DH. The design and construction contract covering both CMH and GCMTI has been awarded in late June 2021, and the construction works have already been commenced.

15. The Government will continue to provide quotas for Government-subsidised CM out-patient general consultation, acupuncture and bone-setting/tui-na services at the Chinese Medicine Clinics cum Training and Research Centres (CMCTRs) established in the 18 districts over the territory. CMCTRs has been promoting the development of CM through CM services, training and research. Furthermore, the HA will continue to develop Integrated Chinese-Western Medicine (ICWM) in-patient services at public hospitals to provide in-patient CM services to patients of designated disease areas (including stroke care, musculoskeletal pain management, and cancer palliative care). The number of participating hospitals has been increased to eight since April 2021, covering all seven hospital clusters of the HA. To tie in with the policy direction of the long-term development of CM, the HA is exploring enhancement of ICWM services by further increasing the number of participating hospitals and

disease areas, as well as regularising the services concerned.

16. Since the commencement of operation in June 2019, various subsidy schemes have been launched under the \$500-million Chinese Medicine Development Fund (CMDf). There have been overwhelming responses from the sector on these subsidy schemes. Around 3 000 projects have been approved so far, benefitting different segments of the CM sector, as well as non-profit-making organisations and academic institutions promoting the development of CM in Hong Kong. The FHB has launched a review on the overall implementation of the CMDf, with a view to further enhancing the subsidy schemes and utilisation of resources so as to support the CM sector in a more effective and targeted manner.

17. With the support of the Central Government, Hong Kong's CM sector will be able to further pursue development in the Greater Bay Area (GBA), with measures including Hong Kong registered proprietary Chinese medicines for external use to be registered and sold in the GBA through streamlined approval procedures, and the recruitment of Hong Kong Chinese medicine practitioners (CMPs) by Mainland public healthcare institutions. The relevant authorities of the Guangdong Province announced the measures concerned on 27 and 30 August 2021 respectively. The Government will continue to encourage the CM sector to seize the opportunities in furthering their development in the GBA, and actively participate in the construction of the CM Highlands in the GBA.

18. With a view to furthering the long-term development of the CM sector, the Government will explore empowering CMPs to prescribe diagnostic radiology (such as X-ray) and laboratory tests for their patients.

(f) Supporting patients in need

Drug subsidy

19. To ease the financial burden of patients requiring long-term medication, the Government and the HA have implemented measures to further refine the means test mechanism of the Samaritan Fund (SF) and Community Care Fund (CCF) Medical Assistance Programmes starting from April 2021. Specific measures include –

- (i) modifying the calculation of Annual Disposable Financial Resources (ADFR) for recurrent applications¹;
- (ii) including more allowable deduction items in the calculation of ADFR and adjusting the calculations of income for all applications; and
- (iii) extending the validity period of the financial assessment of recurrent applicants.

20. With the implementation of the aforesaid improvement measures on top of the enhancements introduced in early 2019 and the new subsidised items, the subsidies granted under the SF and CCF Medical Assistance Programmes could reach \$3.1 billion in 2021-22, representing an increase of 47.6% over 2020-21.

Genomic medicine

21. The pilot phase of Hong Kong Genome Project has commenced in July 2021. The main phase of the Project will commence in 2022, under which whole genome sequencing and analysis will be conducted for more patients having diseases with genetic predisposition and their family members. Around 50 000 whole genome sequencing will be conducted. Patients will benefit from more accurate diagnosis and more personalised treatment. In the long term, the Project will promote clinical application and innovative scientific research on genomic medicine locally.

End-of-life care

22. The Government has completed public consultation on legislative proposals on advance directives and dying in place in relation to end-of-life care services. Relevant law drafting work is underway.

(g) Sustainable development of healthcare system

Healthcare manpower

23. The healthcare system in Hong Kong has been renowned for its quality and reliability. Nevertheless, just like other advanced economies,

¹ The expenses on the drugs under application at public hospitals/clinics in the last 12 months will be deducted and only 80% of the patient's household disposable income will be calculated.

our healthcare system is facing many challenges, including an ageing population, increasing number of diseases triggered by lifestyle, rising public expectations towards healthcare services, etc. To cope with these challenges, sufficient healthcare manpower is a must. The Government has been adopting a multi-pronged approach to enhance healthcare manpower, including increasing continuously the local healthcare training places offered by the University Grants Committee-funded universities and self-financing institutions, and admitting non-locally trained healthcare professionals, with a view to supporting the development of various healthcare services. Meanwhile, the Legislative Council has finished scrutinising the Medical Registration (Amendment) Bill 2021 to enable qualified non-locally trained doctors to practise in Hong Kong, thereby help increasing our overall manpower supply of doctors.

Healthcare professional development

24. In addition, we have to strengthen the roles of other healthcare professionals in the local healthcare system, especially in the primary healthcare setting. We will follow up with the statutory Boards and Councils of various healthcare professions on the recommendations in the Report of the Strategic Review on Healthcare Manpower Planning and Professional Development promulgated in 2017, including proposing legislative amendments to allow patients to have direct access to healthcare professional services (e.g. physiotherapy and occupational therapy) without a doctor's referral so as to avoid delay in treatment. Furthermore, to ensure the professional competency of healthcare personnel, we will legislate to make continuing professional education and/or continuing professional development a mandatory requirement for supplementary medical professionals under the Supplementary Medical Professions Ordinance, as well as nurses and dentists. Drawing on the experience in implementing the on-going voluntary Accredited Registers Scheme for Healthcare Professions, we will also explore the feasibility of introducing a statutory registration regime for those healthcare professionals who are currently not subject to any statutory registration requirements such as clinical psychologists, speech therapists and dietitians, with a view to protecting public interest.

Development of hospitals

25. In 2016, the Government set aside \$200 billion for the HA to implement the First Ten-year Hospital Development Plan (HDP), which covers the redevelopment and expansion of 11 hospitals, and the construction of a new acute hospital, three community health centres and one supporting services centre, for providing more than 6 000 additional bed spaces and 90 additional operating theatres. To date, the Government has upgraded eight projects in full and six projects in part to Category A under the First Ten-year HDP.

26. HA has also commenced the planning of the Second Ten-year HDP for a budget of \$270 billion. Upon completion, there will be a planned capacity of over 9 000 additional beds and other additional hospital facilities that will be meeting the projected service demand up to 2036.

27. HA will also review the design of hospital projects under the two Ten-year HDPs taking into account the experience in combating COVID-19 and incorporate required provisions for two to three general wards in each selected hospital to be readily converted into Tier-2 isolation wards in epidemic situation. In the First Ten-year HDP, the HA plans to provide not less than 300 additional Tier-two isolation beds.

Telehealth

28. HA will continue to modernise its service model, including piloting the use of “HA Go” mobile application to provide telehealth services for suitable patients. HA will provide telehealth services for elderly persons living in remote areas ensuing network infrastructure installed at village offices by the Innovation and Technology Bureau.

(h) Supporting development of life and health technology

29. Clinical data, clinical trials and drug registration are some of the key areas essential to the development of life and health technology. To this end, the FHB, HA and DH will conduct a comprehensive review of the current practices and provide facilitation.

30. Technological breakthrough is a key step to strengthen healthcare services. To further promote research and development (R&D), the HA will provide a dedicated structure to facilitate more institutions to explore the potential use of healthcare data for R&D collaboration with the HA, and make use of a wider network of HA hospitals for research and clinical trial purposes. We will also explore collaboration between the HA and Hong Kong Science and Technology Parks Corporation on the use of HA's clinical data for R&D.

31. Furthermore, the HA provided data to over 100 researchers in 16 collaboration projects through the HA Data Collaboration Lab since 2019, and launched the Self Services Platform to facilitate local researchers using healthcare data for further exploration and innovation.

32. The Government will expedite the legislative process for registering drugs containing new chemical or biological entity under the Pharmacy and Poisons Regulations, so that the relevant drugs will be available in the market as early as possible to support the development of life and health technology and benefit more patients in need.

33. On the other hand, from April 2020 to September 2021, the FHB and its Health and Medical Research Fund have approved a total of \$513 million to support 67 COVID-19 research studies from bench to bedside and at the community level through application of new technologies.

Emerging from the epidemic

34. While we have ambitious plans to deliver, our top priority right now remains clear, i.e. we have to do our best to control the epidemic for the community, so that normal cross-boundary flow of people can be resumed as early as possible. Looking back, in our fight against the epidemic over the past 21 months, we have strictly implemented, with scientific justifications, the strategy of guarding against the importation of cases and the resurgence of local infections. Thanks to the staunch support of the general public, we have weathered four waves of surging cases, and have aptly adjusted our anti-epidemic strategy in light of experience. The Government's anti-epidemic work is outlined at LC Paper No. CB(4)1615/20-21(02).

Conclusion

35. FHB's policy objectives are to safeguard public health and

ensure our medical and healthcare system maintains its high quality services and a sustainable development. To this end, we work strenuously to implement various measures outlined in the paper, fight the battle against COVID-19 and meet the health challenges of our ageing population.

Food and Health Bureau
October 2021