

## CE briefed by SED on preparatory work for new school year

The Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam, today (August 17) was briefed by the Secretary for Education, Mr Kevin Yeung, on the preparatory work of the Education Bureau (EDB) for the commencement of the new school year.

The Chief Secretary for Administration, Mr Matthew Cheung Kin-chung; the Permanent Secretary for Education, Mrs Ingrid Yeung; and the Under Secretary for Education, Dr Choi Yuk-lin also attended the meeting.

At the meeting, Mr Yeung reported that the EDB has been meeting representatives from the education sector, including school sponsoring bodies, school councils, school heads associations and educational bodies, to understand their concerns and listen to their views, with a view to promptly responding to their concerns as well as providing appropriate assistance and guidelines for them to prepare for the commencement of the school year in a timely manner.

Mrs Lam and Mr Cheung had learnt that the EDB, schools and school sponsoring bodies have been and will be working on a number of issues, including the potential traffic problems at the beginning of the school year in early September, helping students resume their learning routines, creating and maintaining a peaceful and harmonious school environment, as well as handling the calls for class boycott.

The Government and the education sector share the common belief that schools are places for students to study. A peaceful and orderly school environment and atmosphere is crucial to students' learning and growth. Schools should not be used by anyone to express political demand as it will not only affect normal school operations but also drag innocent and immature students into political turbulence, losing their normal learning opportunities.

With the approach of the new school year, the EDB and various sectors in the community hope that a peaceful school environment will be restored with normal school operation, and that students will be able to learn in a safe, orderly and professional teaching environment which is free from interferences.

Amid the social incidents in recent months, students' emotion and their peer relationships might also be affected. The EDB believed that school principals and teachers will continue to demonstrate professionalism to help students understand various issues from different perspectives and develop objective and fair analytical skills. Teachers will offer appropriate counselling to students, in collaboration with other professionals as necessary, so as to maintain a caring and harmonious school culture.

Under the current difficult situation, the EDB believed school principals and teachers will maintain their professionalism and put the best interests of all students as their top priority. They will continue to stand fast at their post to teach and protect their students under all circumstances. The EDB will keep close liaison with schools and provide appropriate assistance as and when necessary.

In view of possible traffic problems on the first school day, the EDB and relevant government departments will closely monitor the traffic situation and public transport services and maintain close contact with schools to ensure the smooth start of the new school year.

The EDB reiterated that the HKSAR Government attaches great importance to the nurturing of young people. The Chief Executive in her 2017 Policy Address proposed to carry out in-depth reviews on eight key areas of education. Currently, six of the eight related task forces have completed their work and the government is actively following up on their recommendations. These include injecting \$20 billion into the Research Endowment Fund and setting up a \$3 billion Research Matching Grant Scheme. Starting from the 2019-20 school year, the "One Executive Officer for Each School" policy and the all-graduate teaching force policy will also be implemented. In addition, the government will provide a recurrent Life-wide Learning Grant, enhance support for students with special educational needs, and provide more vocational and professional education opportunities, so as to enhance the teaching and learning environment.

In the past two years, the current-term Government has increased its recurrent expenditure by at least \$8.3 billion for the implementation of a series of education measures. The current-term Government's commitment to quality education will not change in future.