

# Opening remarks by SED at LegCo Finance Committee special meeting

Following is the English translation of the opening remarks by the Secretary for Education, Dr Choi Yuk-lin, at the special meeting of the Legislative Council Finance Committee today (April 15):

Chairman,

Education is the key to nurturing talent. Hong Kong has sound education infrastructure, world-renowned universities, outstanding research talents, as well as diverse and quality basic education. The quality of our teaching and learning is ranked among the top in various international comparative studies. Building on our unique status and advantages under "one country, two systems", Hong Kong will better integrate into the overall development of the country and contribute to the development of the country and Hong Kong. In future, the Government will continue to make plans for education development from a holistic and long-term perspective to develop an international education hub, nurture and attract talent, and enhance Hong Kong's impetus for growth. In line with the national strategy of invigorating the country through science and education, we will foster new quality productive forces and strive for high-quality development, thereby contributing to the building of a leading country in education as well as a nation strong in science and technology.

To provide better education for children, the current-term Government strives to enhance the quality of education to better prepare for the future. It is our goal to nurture young people to become virtuous, knowledgeable and responsible lifelong learners with global perspectives, positive values and attitude, love for the country and the city, who are ready for future challenges and opportunities. The Government's expenditure on education will be \$115.7 billion in the 2024-25 financial year, accounting for about 15 per cent of the total government expenditure. The recurrent expenditure on education has, over the past 10 years, increased by 48 per cent with an average growth rate of around 4.4 per cent per annum. This demonstrates the Government's determination and commitment to investing in education.

To further enhance the quality and diversity of education, as well as strengthen support for students, we implement various new initiatives in the 2024-25 financial year. Measures for post-secondary and Vocational and Professional Education and Training (VPET) include –

(a) Supporting potential self-financing post-secondary institutions to form an alliance of universities of applied sciences (UAS). The Government announced on March 21, 2024, that the Hong Kong Metropolitan University had fulfilled the relevant criteria and successfully qualified as the first UAS in Hong Kong. We have set aside a start-up fund of \$100 million to support the formation of the alliance of UAS, and to support joint promotional

activities of the alliance in the next five to 10 years, to instil in students, parents and the community better appreciation of the importance of VPET.

(b) Providing additional subsidies for full-time students pursuing designated applied degree programmes under the Study Subsidy Scheme for Designated Professions/Sectors to encourage institutions to offer more applied degree programmes and to enhance enrolment incentive.

(c) Supporting the Vocational Training Council to further strengthen its efforts on VPET, including extending the Pilot Incentive Scheme to Employers under the Training and Support Scheme as well as the Pilot Subsidy Scheme for Students of Professional Part time Programmes for five years, further supporting student exchange activities, enhancing support for students with special educational needs, encouraging employers to provide workplace learning, and strengthening the promotion of VPET.

(d) Gradually increasing the quota of the Hong Kong PhD Fellowship Scheme from 300 to 400 places per academic year, to attract more outstanding talent to study and conduct research in Hong Kong.

For students' physical and psychological well-being, the Education Bureau (EDB) provides each publicly funded primary and secondary school and their Parent-Teacher Associations the One-off Grant for Mental Health at School of \$60,000 and the One-off Grant for Mental Health of Parents and Students of \$20,000 to help schools organise related programmes or procure related services or materials for promoting mental health of students, teachers and parents in the 2023/24 and 2024/25 school years. We launch "Mental Health Literacy" resource packages for students at different learning stages in phases starting from the 2023/24 school year, so as to facilitate the school in promoting mental-health literacy in class, thereby strengthening students' awareness of mental health. We also provide a series of intensive workshops for teachers and school guidance personnel to enhance their knowledge and skills in caring for students with mental-health needs.

For supporting students with special educational needs, the EDB enhances the existing staff provision of resource teachers for students comorbid with autism spectrum disorder in primary and secondary sections of aided special schools and extend it to schools for social development starting from the 2024/25 school year.

For primary and secondary education, the EDB launches a five-year "Greater Bay Area Career Exploration Tours" programme starting from the 2023/24 school year with a view to deepening senior secondary students' understanding of the latest developments of various industries in the Greater Bay Area through personal observation and experience. The programme will provide around 700 tour quotas for public sector schools (including special schools) and Direct Subsidy Scheme schools operating senior secondary curriculum from the 2024-25 to 2028-29 financial years. Together with the Mainland exchange programmes provided for primary and secondary students on a regular basis and Mainland study tours for the senior secondary subject of

Citizenship and Social Development implemented since the 2022/23 school year, students will have ample opportunities to visit the Mainland and gain a first-hand understanding of our country's development and achievements. In addition, we implement the subject on science in primary schools starting from the 2025/26 school year with a view to strengthening students' scientific and creative thinking. The final version of the curriculum framework was announced in March 2024. We also provide a one-off grant of \$350,000 for each publicly funded primary school to kick-start the subject. Upon enacting legislation for safeguarding national security on Article 23 of the Basic Law by the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, we will, building upon our foundation, step up the support for schools to integrate relevant topics into learning and teaching, with a view to enhancing students' awareness of safeguarding our national unity and ethnic solidarity, as well as maintaining the security, sovereignty and development interests of our nation.

For kindergarten education, we increase the one-off provision of the Grant for Promotion of Chinese Art and Culture to enable kindergartens to organise more school-based activities of Chinese culture to further enhance students' understanding of traditional Chinese culture, cultivate their national identity and sense of belonging to our country, and nurture their love to our country as well as their sense of national pride. We also increase the one-off provision of the Professional Capacity Enhancement Grant with expanded usage scope to further strengthen the capacity and professional development of kindergarten teachers, including arranging exchange activities or sharing of good practices with kindergartens on the Mainland, with a view to fostering collaboration among kindergartens and enhancing the quality of kindergarten education.

In the coming year, echoing the strategy of invigorating the country through science and education, we will build on our achievements and consolidate our experiences to proactively take forward the work on various fronts in order to contribute to the development of our country and Hong Kong and at the same time tell good stories of Hong Kong's education. Mr Chairman, my colleagues and I will be happy to answer further questions from Members. Thank you.