

## SCED speaks on “cruise-to-nowhere” itineraries and incentives for vaccination

Following is the transcript of remarks by the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Mr Edward Yau, on "cruise-to-nowhere" itineraries and incentives for vaccination at a media session after attending the Panel on Economic Development meeting at the Legislative Council today (May 24):

Reporter: Secretary, for these "cruise-to-nowhere" plans, if vaccination is a requirement for people to join this kind of tours, will it lower the attractiveness, and make the market smaller when it excludes people who are not vaccinated? You are saying that the launch date is expected to be some time in the summer, will it be in August or some time like that? The second question is regarding the incentives that are proposed by the commercial sector to boost vaccination. Shouldn't the Government take charge of these incentives, instead of letting the commercial sector do the negotiating?

Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development: On the first question about cruises, given the global pandemic situation and some unhappy incidents where outbreaks happened in cruise lines, I think the public or the operators will be exceptionally cautious in resuming any form of cruise travel. But having said that, there are examples of cruises departing from the port, going out to the high seas and returning without calling on any ports, thereby eliminating any chance of getting the virus from another place. It's perhaps the middle ground. But there are exceptional measures that would need to be taken both by the operators as well as the patrons to make sure that this is a (safe) journey worth taking, as we are also aware that the public have been stranded for quite a long time (in the case of outbreaks). Some people say this kind of short cruise resembles staycations where people stay in hotels. If sufficient precautions are taken and if crew members fulfil all the quarantine, testing, as well as vaccination requirements, would it be a safe start for selected few to have this limited short cruise? Of course, (there should be) extra protection for patrons, they also need to do the vaccination, which, as I said, is becoming a new norm for any resumption of travelling in the long term. Let's start preparing ourselves.

As regards the incentives proposed by the private sector or the commercial sector to boost vaccination, I think it is a good move because the business sector is also conscious that without sufficient vaccination (coverage), we will still get stuck in a situation that we (can only) wait and see. Vaccination does provide a very strong protection for individuals and the community at large, minimising a public health hazard. The Government will be happy to see any incentives by individuals or enterprises to help this campaign of making people realise that it is for the good of all in the community. The Government has in fact done its major part in providing sufficient vaccines, and in educating and promoting the value and

significance of vaccination. We have seen many medical professionals offering advice that there is in fact no room for just waiting because without vaccine protection, people may be exposed to a high risk on every single day. So, with the advantage of the availability of vaccines and the convenience of having them in many community centres, why not proceed and why still wait? The commercial sector is also giving the same advice. That's exactly what I have heard when I met with chambers and business organisations. I do encourage them to join hands in helping to promote the community awareness and participation in the vaccination.

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