

SED on students studying overseas, vaccination and school education

Following is the transcript of remarks by the Secretary for Education, Mr Kevin Yeung, at a media session after attending the 27th HK International Education Expo today (May 29):

Reporter: Multiple figures and teachers are reflecting that most students are withdrawing from local and international schools this year. Many of them are migrating overseas. Is this an alarming trend and would the Government acknowledge that this is a part of the result of the fear of the National Security Law and would the Education Bureau (EDB) find ways to maintain the stability? The second question, has the EDB looked into the number of percentage cities' teachers having been vaccinated and will the EDB take a first step, for example, to give Government Schools' teachers holiday after being vaccinated as an incentive? And last question, June 4 is approaching, and Alliance's application for gathering has been banned. Can schools still hold memorial event about June 4 (incident) this year? And if teachers upload photos on social media, would they face consequences?

Secretary for Education: You asked a number of questions. The first one is about the students studying overseas. Every year, when the school year starts, we start to collect information about the number of students seated at every school. So at this stage, I could not tell for sure, the actual number of student leaving or studying overseas, leaving Hong Kong studying overseas. But we of course will monitor the figures. But Hong Kong is a free society, and the students and parents could decide where the students will study. We respect their decisions. At the same time, I wish to point out that the quality of education in Hong Kong is comparable to all the major countries or cities in the rest of the world. So our quality of education is really very good. So if the factor is about the quality of education, I can ensure all parents that the student will have bright future if they stay in Hong Kong. But, of course, when parents decide where their children are going to study, they must have other considerations. Then that is something for parents to decide.

Reporter: Will the EDB consider giving incentive, for example, incentive holiday to Government Schools' teachers (after they get vaccinated)?

Secretary for Education: On vaccination, we have collected information from schools about the number of teachers having taken vaccination or planning to take vaccination. We are consolidating the data and we will provide a reply to the LegCo (Legislative Council). Since this is a question from the Legislative Council Special Finance Committee meeting, we will give it a reply in due course. But in terms of Government Schools' teachers, you ask about whether we will be giving holiday to Government teachers. It will follow the arrangement for civil servants. And I think we should wait for the Civil Service Bureau to come up with the final proposal. And the teachers of Government Schools will follow that practice. The third question, as I always

say, Hong Kong is a free society, and freedom of expression is guaranteed in the Basic Law. But when it comes to education, when it comes to education at school, schools have to consider the overall objective of bringing a subject in the curriculum or into the lessons. What they are trying to achieve, whether it is suitable for that level of students and that age of students. So when the schools decide whether they wish to cover the subject of June 4, I think they have to consider the curriculum's objective, the lessons' objective, and whether it is suitable for that age of students. And on the question regarding the expression of personal opinions, I think it all depends on how they do it and what they are going to achieve. But I can say that the freedom of expression is guaranteed under the Basic Law.

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