

SED's opening remarks at LegCo Finance Committee special meeting

Following is the opening remarks (English translation) by the Secretary for Education, Mr Kevin Yeung, at the special meeting of the Legislative Council Finance Committee today (April 14):

Chairman,

Education is the key to nurturing talent and the Government will keep on devoting resources to support policies for the provision of quality education. The estimated total expenditure on education in 2022-23 is \$111.9 billion. Of this, the recurrent education expenditure increases by \$4.7 billion to \$101.9 billion, accounting for about 18 per cent of the estimated total government recurrent expenditure. The recurrent expenditure on education has, over 10 years, increased by 61 per cent with an average growth rate of 5.4 per cent per annum. This clearly demonstrates the Government's long-term commitment to investment in education.

Our vision for education is to nurture our young people into quality citizens with a sense of national identity and social responsibility, an affection for Hong Kong as well as an international perspective. The current-term Government has already allocated a total of over \$13.5 billion additional recurrent expenditure for the implementation of a series of policy measures covering the entire education system to further enhance the quality of education. In the Budget for 2022-23, our key work areas include:

(a) Commitment to promoting national education and cultivating in students an affection for our country. The Education Bureau (EDB) is responsible for promoting national education at schools and will continue to adopt a wide array of measures with a "multi-pronged and co-ordinated" approach, which includes providing curriculum guides, developing learning and teaching resources, offering training for teachers, organising life-wide learning activities for students and Mainland exchange programmes for teachers and students, etc, to support schools' effective planning and promotion of national education within and beyond the classroom, so that teachers and students can gain a better understanding of our country's history and development, the Constitution and the Basic Law, the national flag, the national emblem, the national anthem, as well as the significance and importance of national security, and develop a sense of national identity.

(b) Strengthening our support for e-learning. The Quality Education Fund has set aside \$2 billion to launch a three-year programme starting from the 2021/22 school year, under which \$1.5 billion is allocated to subsidise schools to purchase mobile computer devices and portable Wi-Fi devices for loan to needy students. This initiative will facilitate the home learning of students from grassroots families during the epidemic, and it is expected to benefit some 310 000 students. Besides, \$500 million has been allocated to

support new e-learning initiatives, aiming at facilitating the development, enrichment and provision of e-learning ancillary facilities.

(c) Further promoting STEM education in primary and secondary schools to nurture students' innovation. We have set up the "Standing Committee on STEM Education" and are in the course of updating curricula, enhancing teacher training, providing resource support, etc. For the school curriculum, the EDB is now strengthening coding education and introducing learning elements on emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence, with emphasis on further developing students' media and information literacy in the digital era.

(d) Promoting the development of vocational and professional education and training in support of flexible and diversified pathways for young people with different aspirations and abilities. The Pilot Incentive Scheme to Employers and the Pilot International Study Programme under the Training and Support Scheme as well as the Pilot Subsidy Scheme for Students of Professional Part-time Programmes currently implemented by the Vocational Training Council will be extended for two years to benefit more trainees. The pilots could facilitate workplace learning and assessment, broaden learners' horizons and encourage continuing education among the working population. We are also reviewing the Diploma Yi Jin subsidy scheme and enhancing the programme curriculum. The scheme will be regularised starting from the 2023/24 school year to continue supporting the Secondary Six school leavers as well as adult learners in securing employment and pursuing further studies.

To support students with special educational needs (SEN), the annual expenditure incurred by the Government on integrated education has increased from about \$1.5 billion a year to about \$3.7 billion and the expenditure on special education has increased from about \$2.5 billion a year to about \$3.6 billion. In addition, we have provided various support measures for non-Chinese speaking students (including those with SEN) from pre-primary to secondary education, and the estimated expenditure in the 2021/22 school year is about \$560 million in total.

Apart from the above initiatives, the EDB will continue to implement various existing policies, including continuing to enhance the quality of kindergarten education in various aspects, providing more resources to support learning and teaching development in schools, providing support for students with diverse needs, etc. In particular, it is an established government policy to implement small class teaching (SCT) in public sector primary schools. At present, around 80 per cent of public sector primary schools in Hong Kong have implemented SCT. A total of 42 schools will start implementing SCT in the coming three school years. By then, the respective percentage share will increase to nearly 90 per cent. We will continue to maintain liaison with the public sector primary schools which have yet to implement SCT and their respective school sponsoring bodies, and encourage them to get prepared for early implementation of SCT when the conditions so permit.

In addition, as mentioned in the Budget for the 2022-23 financial year, we have paid particular attention to strengthen our one-off support measures for students in the face of the epidemic. The Government will pay the examination fees for school candidates sitting for the 2023 Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination. The estimated number of beneficiaries is 43 500 candidates.

Chairman, my colleagues and I will be happy to answer further questions from Members. Thank you.