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To alleviate the problem, the city government last year released its five-year plan for education development, which aims in part to keep higher-education institutes "small" - geographically and in terms of enrollment - as well as relocate some university facilities for undergraduates from central areas.

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Overcrowding and urban planning were major talking points at the annual session of the Beijing Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, the city's top advisory body, which concluded on Tuesday.

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"It's almost imperative that some colleges and universities leave the city, but we expect it will be a long process," Yuan Jixi, a member of the committee and deputy director of Renmin University of China's School of Chinese Classics, told China Daily during a break in discussions.

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In the process, he said, the government will need to solve a series of potential problems facing university employees, such as the quality of life, schools, public amenities and employment opportunities in the new locations. These employees need to be "willing and happy to move", Yuan added.

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Beijing's education sector includes more than 90 higher-education institutes, the most among Chinese cities, and employs hundreds of thousands of people.

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Yuan said China could learn from developed countries that not only have top colleges and universities in the capital, but also have a balanced distribution of quality higher-education resources nationwide.

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"Which institutions should relocate and which should not will depend on individual development targets and the capital's development plan as a whole," said Guan Ping, a geology professor at Peking University and a member of Beijing CPPCC.

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