

LCQ19: Education on "June 4 incident"

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Following is a question by the Hon Kam Nai-wai and a written reply by the Secretary for Home Affairs, Mr Tsang Tak-sing, in the Legislative Council today (June 2):

Question:

Given that the Committee on the Promotion of Civic Education is tasked to promote civic and national education among members of the public, and there have been comments that the June 4 incident in 1989 is one of the most important chapters in the contemporary history of China, with its impact spreading across Europe and has significant inspiration for the fall of the Berlin Wall in Germany and the pro-democracy movements in many Eastern European countries. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (a) whether the authorities have assessed if the June 4 incident is an important part of the contemporary history of China; if the assessment outcome is in the negative, of the reasons for that;
- (b) what ways the authorities had used to enable members of the public to know more about the June 4 incident since the reunification of Hong Kong 14 years ago and of the amount of resources allocated for this purpose; of the authorities' plans to deepen the understanding of members of the public of the June 4 incident in the next three years;
- (c) given that there have been comments that in the past, the authorities have refused to describe the June 4 incident in school curriculum in a more detailed manner, whether it has assessed if this would make it difficult for students to understand the impact of the June 4 incident in China and many places in the world; and
- (d) whether the aforesaid Committee has approved any grant to help members of the public to understand the June 4 incident since the reunification of Hong Kong 14 years ago; if so, of the number of such projects and the amount of grants involved; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

The HKSAR Government attaches great importance to the promotion of national education, and provides members of the public, especially young people, through various channels, information about our country such as her social and economic developments, people, geography, history, culture, etc. in order to enhance public understanding about our country and national awareness. The National Education Sub-committee of the Committee on the Promotion of Civic Education (the Committee) formulates strategies and measures to promote national education, encourages and assists all sectors of the community to actively promote national awareness, and fosters co-operation amongst the Government, voluntary agencies, youth organisations, district and community organisations in promoting national education. In response to the question, our reply is as follows:

(a) The Central Government has already drawn its conclusion on the "June 4 incident" referred to in the question, which was a political turmoil that took place mainly in Beijing in 1989. In the past twenty years or so, the enormous progress made by China since the reform and opening-up of the country is evident. These are integral parts of the contemporary history of China. The different views held by people in Hong Kong towards historical events have always been respected since the handover. The HKSAR Government protects Hong Kong people's rights and freedom, including the freedom of speech, assembly, demonstration, etc. in accordance with the law.

(b) The HKSAR Government has been actively promoting national education, including the understanding of the history of our country, to the community through various channels. Members of the public can understand more about the past and present developments of our country through the feature column of the Committee's website, publications and calendar, as well as national education TV programmes produced by the Committee, etc. We do not have statistics on the resources devoted to cover individual historical event. For example, the "June 4 incident" was mentioned in "A Century of China Exhibition" held by the Hong Kong Museum of History under the Leisure and Cultural Services Department last year. In the future, the Government will continue to allocate resources to enhance promotional activities on national education.

(c) In respect of school curriculum, all the Chinese History textbooks submitted for review in the past 10 years have included coverage on the "June 4 incident". Teachers

should have ample opportunities to discuss the development of Chinese history in accordance with their students' abilities and interests through the subject of Chinese History. For example, the relevant topics include "Internal Affairs and Foreign Relations of the People's Republic of China" at junior secondary level and "Reform and Opening-up" at new senior secondary level. In addition, there are topics that cover the historical and social development of China for the period from 1976 to 2000 in the subjects of new senior secondary Liberal Studies and History. Teachers can introduce the "June 4 incident" through these topics.

(d) As set out in our reply to (b) above, the Committee does not have statistics on the resources devoted to cover individual historical event.

Ends/Wednesday, June 2, 2010

Issued at HKT 14:31