

# LCQ1: Young people's minds being poisoned by terrorist ideologies

Following is a question by the Hon Cheung Kwok-kwan and a reply by the Secretary for Security, Mr Tang Ping-keung, in the Legislative Council today (August 18):

Question:

Last month, a university student union issued a statement expressing "gratitude" for and "paying tribute" to a suspect who had killed himself after attacking a police officer, and a young man was arrested for suspected hurling of flammable objects at the Government House. Moreover, the Police cracked a terrorist ring, seizing raw materials for explosives and plots for attacks as well as arresting a number of secondary school students. Some members of the public pointed out that the aforesaid incidents reflected that some young people's minds have been poisoned by terrorist ideologies. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) whether it has studied the means and tactics currently used by terrorists for infiltrating terrorist ideologies into schools and recruiting students to carry out terrorist activities, as well as the severity of such situation; if so, of the details;
- (2) of the new measures put in place by the Education Bureau and the Security Bureau to curb the infiltration of terrorist ideologies into schools, lest students' minds be poisoned; and
- (3) in respect of terrorists disseminating through the Internet unwholesome messages, such as those that glorify terrorism, in an attempt to recruit young people to carry out terrorist activities, of the new corresponding measures put in place by the Government?

Reply:

President,

A spate of cases related to terrorist activities occurred in recent months, involving serious crimes such as stabbing of a police officer with a knife, suspected possession of firearms and ammunition, suspected arson and attempts of plotting bomb attacks to cause serious casualties. The most worrying is that nine of the 14 persons arrested in the case of plotting terrorist bombings are minors and students. These young people have been misled into participating in terrorist activities and their future has been shattered, which is regrettable.

The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government (HKSARG) strives to combat terrorist activities or any such attempts. The entire community must make concerted efforts to say "no" to violence, and refuse to make heroic, glorify or downplay any violent attack, so as to protect young people

from being poisoned by extreme ideologies and becoming terrorists, which will bring lifelong regrets.

My reply to the three parts of Hon Cheung Kwok-kwan's question is as follows:

(1) As observed from the global landscape of terrorist activities, international terrorist organisations make use of the Internet and social media to disseminate promotional materials which incite violent attacks in an attempt to spread extreme ideologies to various parts of the world. Similar to the trend of global terrorist activities, local radical organisations recruit members mostly via social media. However, there are also signs indicating that some people are infiltrating terrorism into schools or recruiting students from schools to participate in terrorist activities.

In fact, student concern groups, political bodies or even tutorial schools were seen in recent years to have wantonly instilled among students improper values and disseminated false or biased messages in an attempt to incite their hatred against the country and the HKSARG, or even advocated the resort to violence and illegal acts for political ends. They promoted extreme ideologies and recruited students by various means such as producing biased teaching materials, setting up on-street booths and making use of the Internet. Also, ideologies endangering national security are still infiltrating via the media, culture and arts, and other "soft resistance" means to poison young people.

In addition, we should stay on guard that some people in the community are trying to make heroic, glorify or downplay acts of violent attacks. Such attempts are not only trampling upon the law and violating common moral standards but may also promote the spread and infiltration of extreme ideologies. People sympathising with violent attacks are prone to further radicalisation and becoming supporters, who could then easily turn into participants of terrorist activities. Members of the public should draw a lesson from the similar radicalisation process of terrorism which are frequently seen overseas.

(2) The HKSARG will make every effort to curb the breeding of terrorism in Hong Kong. The Inter-departmental Counter Terrorism Unit of the Security Bureau stays highly vigilant at all times and adjusts its strategies and deployment in a timely manner to strengthen counter-terrorism (CT) preparedness through continuous assessment of global and local landscapes as well as collation and analysis of intelligence obtained via various channels.

On preventing infiltration of terrorism into schools, the Police have all along strived to strengthen their efforts in gathering CT intelligence for early identification and deterrence of acts endangering public safety by violent radicals. Publicity and education are equally important for instilling correct values and law-abiding awareness among young people as early as possible. The Police will endeavour to foster stronger partnership with schools through School Liaison Officers and educate students via talks or other activities on the harm of terrorism to the community and how they could identify extreme ideologies and take precautionary measures

accordingly.

A school is a place for students to learn and grow. The Education Bureau (EDB) has been reminding students and schools to create a peaceful and orderly school environment and atmosphere, and to maintain a campus free from political interference so that schools' normal operation and students' learning and healthy development are not affected. Schools have also been reminded to nurture students' correct values and positive thinking as well as elucidate their stances and requirements to parents for appealing them to persuade students not to take part in dangerous or unlawful activities. The EDB issued a circular on July 3, 2020 reminding primary and secondary schools as well as kindergartens that they should timely facilitate all levels of personnel and students to acquire an understanding of and abide by the Hong Kong National Security Law (NSL). The EDB also issued detailed guidelines to schools on February 4, this year requiring schools to formulate and implement measures related to safeguarding national security and national security education, to step up prevention and suppression of teaching or other school activities that are in breach of the Basic Law, the NSL and other laws applicable to Hong Kong, as well as to prevent illegal activities from permeating schools and to handle such matters. The EDB will continue to provide advice to schools through different channels, including school visits and daily contacts, so that concerted efforts could be made to provide a safe and peaceful environment for students to learn and grow healthily.

The EDB has also enhanced the relevant training for teachers. Starting from the 2020/21 school year, the content on the Constitution, the Basic Law and national security education in the core training programmes for newly-joined teachers, in-service teachers and teachers aspiring for promotion as well as the training programmes for school principals has been strengthened.

(3) Fake and unwholesome messages incite hatred, encourage violence and glorify terrorism, inflicting immense harm to the community. As such messages may become the soil for breeding terrorism, the HKSARG will definitely tackle them vigorously in accordance with the law. The Police will strengthen their work in gathering intelligence, and conduct full investigation into any intention for attempt to incite hatred or violence by spreading fake or unwholesome messages on the Internet.

Certain provisions are already in place under the existing legal framework to deal with dissemination of inappropriate information. For example, acts with seditious intention, utterance of seditious words or handling and possession of seditious publication are criminal offences under sections 9 and 10 of the Crimes Ordinance. There are also specific provisions in the NSL to curb the spread of seditious or extreme ideologies.

In parallel, the Secretary for Home Affairs is seriously examining practices of other countries and places in handling fake news and false information. Thank you, President.