

LCQ12: Education in the national flag and regional flag

Following is a question by the Hon Tony Tse and a written reply by the Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs, Mr Erick Tsang Kwok-wai, in the Legislative Council today (June 12):

Question:

The National Flag and National Emblem Ordinance and the Regional Flag and Regional Emblem Ordinance respectively provide for the specifications, use and protection of the national flag and regional flag, flag raising ceremonies and related etiquette, as well as education in the national flag and regional flag. There are views that currently, the relevant education efforts and the requirement for the regular conduct of flag raising ceremonies are primarily focused on primary and secondary schools, and that the Government should further promote such education to the entire society. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the Government's efforts to deliver education in the national flag and regional flag to the public, in addition to primary and secondary schools;

(2) whether it will consider setting up sales points in some suitable government premises and buildings for the sale of national flags, national emblems, regional flags, regional emblems, and related souvenirs;

(3) whether it will further enhance the Flag Raising Ceremony, which is currently held regularly at Golden Bauhinia Square in Wan Chai, including (i) reviewing the frequency, date and time for holding such ceremony, (ii) stepping up publicity among the public and tourists, and (iii) adding more performance programmes and tourism facilities in addition to the Flag Raising Ceremony; whether it will consider holding flag raising ceremonies at more suitable and distinctive locations; and

(4) of the requirements, rules and implementation status regarding the display of the national flag and regional flag, as well as the conduct of flag raising ceremonies in the offices of government departments and government buildings; whether it will strengthen such requirements and rules, including providing appropriate guidelines and training to the staff responsible for flag raising ceremonies and requiring all government personnel to participate in at least one flag raising ceremony per year, where practicable?

Reply:

President,

Having consulted relevant bureaux and departments, the consolidated reply to the question raised by the Hon Tony Tse is as follows:

The amended National Flag and National Emblem Ordinance and the Regional Flag and Regional Emblem Ordinance came into effect on October 8, 2021 and November 24, 2023 respectively, providing for the use and protection of the national flag, national emblem, regional flag, and regional emblem in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR), including the proper use, etiquette, education and promotion in relation to the national flag, national emblem, regional flag and regional emblem.

On promotion and education, the Education Bureau has included the national flag, national emblem, regional flag and regional emblem in primary and secondary education, and required schools to display the national flag and regional flag on each school day and conduct weekly flag raising ceremony. Besides, the HKSAR Government has produced announcements or materials in the public interest (API) to publicise the background, symbolic meaning as well as the related rules of usage and etiquette, etc, in relation to the national flag, national emblem and national anthem. Apart from broadcasting these APIs on local television and radio channels, we also made use of different online social media platforms to disseminate relevant information, with a view to enhancing public awareness of respecting and protecting the national flag, national emblem and national anthem, and promoting the understanding on their proper use. Currently, we are producing a new set of APIs to educate members of the public to respect and use properly the regional flag and regional emblem to express their love for our country and the HKSAR. The APIs will be broadcast on various television and radio channels, as well as social media platforms. To enable members of the public to have a clearer and more accurate understanding on the two pieces of legislation, we will also consolidate relevant publicity information in an easy-to-understand manner, for instance, producing comics, etc, and make use of social media to promote it extensively.

On the selling of national flag and regional flag, as well as related souvenirs, the existing legislation has not prohibited on commercial sales of them, and the public can easily purchase them in physical or online shops. Besides, the Government Gift Shop set up at the Central Government Offices offers a variety of souvenir items including bowl and plate sets, tea pots, tea cups, folders, notebooks and bear toys, etc, that bear the design of the regional flag and regional emblem for purchase. Members of the public can also visit the online store to purchase such gifts. Currently there is no plan to set up additional Government Gift Shop at other government premises or buildings.

According to the existing legislation regarding the raising and lowering of the national flag and regional flag, the national flag and regional flag must be raised in the morning and lowered in the evening. As such, with the flag-raising ceremony taking place at the Golden Bauhinia Square everyday currently, there is no room for increasing the frequency of flag-raising ceremonies. The national flag and regional flag are important symbols and signs of our country and the HKSAR that must be respected and loved. Flag-raising ceremonies are solemn and of special significance. We are thus of the view that when considering the location and occasion for holding flag-raising ceremonies, attracting tourists is not the most important consideration.

The HKSAR Government has made clear directions regarding the display of the national flag and regional flag at major government organisations, for instance, the Central Government Offices, the boundary control points, major government complexes and public sports and cultural venues, etc. The Protocol Division has drawn up guidelines on the display of the national flag and regional flag at government department's offices and buildings for government departments' reference, and has reminded them to explain in detail to the responsible personnel the proper procedures for raising and lowering the flags and points to note. The Protocol Division also provides advice on the raising, lowering and display of the national flag and regional flag to government departments subject to the situation, and suitably reviews the assistance required by departments in this respect.