

LCQ4: Commemorating history of and martyrs in Hong Kong's resistance against Japanese aggression

Following is a question by the Hon Chan Han-pan and a reply by the Secretary for Home Affairs, Mr Caspar Tsui, in the Legislative Council today (June 16):

Question:

It is learnt that during the occupation of Hong Kong by the Japanese army, the Hong Kong Independent Battalion (the Battalion) under the Dongjiang Column anti-Japanese aggression guerrilla force of the Communist Party of China rescued quite a number of cultural elites and members of the Allied troops who had been captured, making significant contribution in the War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it has new plans to preserve the historical facts about the Battalion's fight against Japanese aggression and commend the Battalion's contribution and patriotism, as well as to use such materials for the purpose of education on patriotism;

(2) given that a historical research institution has, in collaboration with organisations such as the fraternity association of the Battalion's members, submitted to the Government a proposal for the construction of an anti-Japanese aggression heritage trail in areas from Sha Tau Kok to Wu Kau Tang in North District, with a view to displaying the historical facts about anti-Japanese aggression and paying tribute to the martyrs, thereby strengthening the national and ethnic identity of Hong Kong people (especially young people), whether the Government will adopt the proposal; whether it will consider taking over the management and maintenance of the monuments for anti-Japanese aggression martyrs situated in Wu Kau Tang and Tsam Chuk Wan in Sai Kung; and

(3) whether it will invite the surviving members of the Battalion to serve as tour guides for anti-Japanese aggression memorial facilities, and grant pensions to them and the descendants of the deceased members of the Battalion; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

As instructed by the Chief Secretary for Administration, the Home Affairs Bureau would give a consolidated reply to the question on behalf of the Administration as follows:

The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government attaches great importance to promoting public understanding of the history of the War of Resistance Against Japan in Hong Kong. Over the years, the Government has been fostering the public's understanding of this important chapter of history and the contribution of the martyrs through different channels, including exhibitions and official memorial ceremonies.

Both the Hong Kong Museum of History (HKMH) and the Hong Kong Museum of Coastal Defence under the management of the Leisure and Cultural Services Department feature the history of the War of Resistance in their permanent exhibition galleries for long term display. Currently, both museums are updating their permanent exhibitions to further enhance their presentation of the part of history from the fall of Hong Kong to the eventual surrender of Japan, with enriched contents covering Japanese invasion of China, Japanese attack on Hong Kong, the Battle of Hong Kong, Japanese occupation of Hong Kong, the Dongjiang Column (the Column), international allies and Japan's surrender, to deepen the public's appreciation, passion and understanding towards this chapter of Hong Kong history.

Apart from their permanent exhibitions, both museums stage thematic exhibitions relating to the war from time to time. Examples are "Military Relics in Hong Kong", "Escape from Hong Kong: The Road to Huizhou", "To the Last Man: Canadian Troops in the Battle of Hong Kong", "Anti-Japanese War Heroes: An Exhibition on the Hong Kong Independent Battalion of the Dongjiang Column", "Pictorial Exhibition on the Nanjing Massacre", "Fighting as One: Reminders of the Eight Years' War of Resistance in Guangdong and Hong Kong", "Braving the Storm: Hong Kong under Japanese Occupation" and "Life Under the Japanese Occupation, 1941-45", etc. The museums also organise a wide range of activities including public lectures, study tours to military sites, workshops, travelling exhibitions and dramas, etc, for the enhanced promotion of the related history to the general public and schools. The museums will continue to introduce these histories to the public through exhibitions and activities. The HKSAR Government also organises official memorial ceremonies every year to commemorate the victory of the Chinese people's War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression and to express condolences to the victims of the War. Former members from the Column have also been invited to the ceremonies to foster the public's understanding of their great contribution and patriotism.

At present, the University Grants Committee (UGC) and the Research Grants Council (RGC) provide funding to support the research of the UGC-funded universities through different means. The Competitive Research Funding Schemes of UGC and RGC are open for research proposals from all disciplines and topics (including the history of the War of Resistance). Research proposals are assessed on the basis of their academic merits. Apart from these fundings for research generally applicable to higher education institutions, the Government would also commission research on the history of the War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression. For example, the HKMH engaged experts and academics to conduct research projects on the topic. These projects include "Oral History Project on Reminiscence of the War Experience in Hong Kong", "Oral History Project on Former Members of the Hong

Kong-Kowloon Brigade of the East River Column", etc. Some of the findings were published in *The Defence of Hong Kong: Collected Essays on the Hong Kong-Kowloon Brigade of the East River Column*. The museums will continue to devote resources to study, collate and preserve the historical records and exhibits relating to the War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression in Hong Kong. In the period before and after the dates commemorating the victory of the Chinese people's War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression and expressing condolences to the victims in the War, we have also planned to display books related to the War of Resistance at the Hong Kong Public Libraries every year to attract readers and facilitate their borrowing of the books, as well as to organise seminars on the topic.

Regarding the monument for martyrs, the reprovisioning of the Cenotaph for Martyrs in Wu Kau Tang was an initiative championed by the North District Council and was endorsed in July 2009 for implementation under the District Minor Works (DMW) Programme. The North District Office, being the works agent of the DMW project, is responsible for the repair and maintenance of the monument; and arranged for cleaning of the monument when the monument was defaced with graffiti in September 2019. Meanwhile, the construction of the Memorial Monuments for Sai Kung Martyrs During World War II in Tsam Chuk Wan was self-financed by the rural residents in Sai Kung. Since its commissioning in January 1989, the memorial park has all been managed and maintained by the Sai Kung Rural Committee. Relevant government departments will provide cleaning service when necessary. As the memorial park has been incorporated into the List of State Facilities and Sites Marking the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression (the third of its kind), the Sai Kung District Office will assist in the maintenance and cleaning of the park and seek assistance from professional departments where repair works are necessary.

As regards pensions, according to the Hong Kong War Memorial Pensions Ordinance (Cap. 386) (the Ordinance), the Government pays the Hong Kong War Memorial Pensions to persons who have contributed to the defence of Hong Kong in the Pacific War, persons who have suffered in the War and spouses of such persons. The Ordinance was amended in 1999 to cover the Hong Kong Independent Battalion of the Column. If members of the Column, between February 3, 1942 and September 1, 1945 and during service of the Column, sustained an injury or was captured and held in captivity by the Japanese authority in Hong Kong; was killed in action; died as a result of an injury sustained in action; or died as a result of an injury or hardship sustained during such service, such persons and/or his/her spouse can apply for the status of an eligible beneficiary under the Ordinance and receive the pensions.