

LCQ5: Education on and promotion of the country's Constitution and the Basic Law

Following is a question by Dr Hon Priscilla Leung and a reply by the Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs, Mr Patrick Nip, in the Legislative Council today (November 21):

Question:

In recent years, some young people have blatantly publicised in a high profile manner political advocacy contravening the country's Constitution and the Basic Law, such as "independence of Hong Kong". Also, quite a number of members of the public do not understand these two constitutional documents. Regarding the education on and promotion of the Constitution and the Basic Law, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) of the details of the work done by the Education Bureau, the Home Affairs Bureau and the Basic Law Promotion Steering Committee to promote the Constitution and the Basic Law among students, young people and teachers in the past three years, and the respective expenditures involved; the criteria adopted when the authorities carry out regular reviews of the effectiveness of such work and the findings of the latest review;
- (2) of the measures taken to ensure that teachers teach their students correct knowledge about the Constitution and the Basic Law; and
- (3) whether it will consider stepping up its efforts to promote the relationship between the Constitution and the Basic Law; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

Having consulted the Education Bureau (EDB) and the Home Affairs Bureau (HAB), our consolidated reply to Dr Hon Leung's question is as follows:

The Constitution of the People's Republic of China (the Constitution) and the Basic Law of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China (the Basic Law) together form the constitutional basis of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR). They form the foundation of "one country, two systems" and provide a strong safeguard for the long-term prosperity and stability of Hong Kong. The HKSAR Government has the responsibility to encourage the general public to have a comprehensive understanding of the Constitution and the Basic Law.

In January 1998, during the early days of the establishment of the

HKSAR, the Government set up the Basic Law Promotion Steering Committee (BLPSC) led by the Chief Secretary for Administration to coordinate the work of various bureaux in promoting the Constitution and the Basic Law. During the early period after Hong Kong's return to the Motherland, the promotion work focused more on introducing the articles in the Basic Law. Gradually, the content of the promotion work has become more in-depth and covered topics such as the origin and design of "one country, two systems" and the relationship between the Constitution and the Basic Law. The means of promotion have also become more diverse to meet the needs of different target groups.

Through the Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau (CMAB), the BLPSC organises large-scale thematic seminars, makes use of electronic media for promotion, organises regular roving exhibitions, arranges mobile resource centres to pay visits to different districts and schools, and subsidises community organisations to organise activities, including talks and quizzes, to enable the public to have a comprehensive and thorough understanding of the Constitution and the Basic Law. Since September this year, we have been distributing the newly printed Constitution and Basic Law booklet to the public to facilitate them to learn the articles of the Constitution and the Basic Law.

For the three financial years from 2015-16 to 2017-18, CMAB spent about \$16 million, \$16 million and \$17 million respectively for promoting the Constitution and the Basic Law. In 2018-19, CMAB has set aside about \$17 million for organising relevant promotion activities.

For school education, the Government has all along been helping students develop a correct understanding of the Constitution and the Basic Law, the origin of the principle of "one country, two systems" and their relevance to the daily lives of the people of Hong Kong through relevant curricula, learning and teaching resources and various learning activities.

In addition to including concepts of the Basic Law and "one country, two systems" in the curricula of related subjects, such as General Studies at the primary level and Chinese History, History, Life and Society, and Liberal Studies at the secondary level, the EDB has also developed learning and teaching resources, such as Basic Law online courses. The EDB has also developed a "Constitution and the Basic Law" module, which has been uploaded onto EDB's website for use by schools since June last year. The topics covered include the constitutional status of the Basic Law, relationship between the Central Authorities and the HKSAR, rights and duties of Hong Kong residents and basic characteristics of the political structure, etc. EDB has developed the Planning and Self-evaluation Tool for Basic Law Education for schools' reference in evaluating the implementation of Basic Law education in schools.

The EDB has introduced into professional training programmes for principals, middle managers and teachers elements of the Constitution and the Basic Law to elaborate on the constitutional status of the Basic Law.

The school sector generally understands that it is their responsibility

to promote the Constitution and Basic Law education. The participation rates of various learning activities and teacher training on Basic Law education are also continuously increasing. The EDB will continue to maintain close communication with schools and other stakeholders to further refine the relevant support measures, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of learning and teaching.

As promotion of the Constitution and the Basic Law to students and teachers is within the purview of EDB's day-to-day curriculum development, the expenditure involved is subsumed under the recurrent expenditure of the EDB.

As regards young people, the Working Group on Local Community under the BLPSC has been working closely with the HAB and Committee on the Promotion of Civic Education (CPCE) to promote the Constitution and the Basic Law at the community level, including the organisation of quiz competitions, seminars, publications for young people, thematic exhibitions and interactive games in the Civic Education Resource Centre, etc.

The HAB and CPCE grant sponsorship every year through the Community Participation Scheme and the Co-operation Scheme with District Councils to support promotional activities targeting at young people related to the Constitution and the Basic Law.

In each of the financial years of 2015-16 to 2017-18, the HAB has incurred \$6.3 million, \$3.5 million and \$3.1 million respectively for the abovementioned promotion. In 2018-19, the HAB has set aside about \$6.0 million in this respect.

Looking forward, we will provide opportunities for more young people to experience and live out "one country, two systems" first-hand, and to comprehensively and concretely understand the Constitution, the Basic Law and the People's Republic of China's implementation of the basic policy of "one country, two systems" in Hong Kong. In particular, I would encourage our young people to learn more about our country's plans for further reform and opening up, including the two important national strategies, namely the Belt and Road Initiative and the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area Development, to broaden their horizons and to explore more possibilities and room for development for Hong Kong and for themselves through upholding the principle of "one country" and leveraging the advantages of "two systems".

We will continue to listen to and take into account views from the public to further enhance the promotion of the Constitution and the Basic Law. I welcome suggestions from Members and from the public so that the Government can take forward the promotion work more effectively.

Thank you.