

LCQ8: Involvement of young people in the promotion of Hong Kong independence

Following is a question by the Hon Tony Tse and a written reply by the Acting Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs, Mr Andy Chan, in the Legislative Council today (October 24):

Question:

On the 24th of last month, the Secretary for Security issued an order under section 8(2) of the Societies Ordinance (Cap 151) to prohibit, with immediate effect, the operation or continued operation of the Hong Kong National Party (HKNP) on the grounds that HKNP's agenda included the establishment of an independent Hong Kong Republic and the abolition of the Basic Law, which is in strict contravention of the Basic Law, and that HKNP had been taking concrete actions to realise its agenda since its establishment. It has been reported that HKNP's core members and supporters are mostly young people. Moreover, some secondary school and post-secondary students have set up organisations in support of Hong Kong independence and advocated Hong Kong independence by handing out flyers, putting up slogans and voicing out their advocacy during school activities and ceremonies. There are comments that youngsters are ignorant about the perils of Hong Kong independence as well as the unlawful and unconstitutional nature of the idea, which reflects the inadequacies of the efforts on national education as well as promotion of the Basic Law and the country's Constitution (particularly the dissemination of messages against Hong Kong independence and secession). In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it will (i) investigate which other organisations in Hong Kong advocate Hong Kong independence currently, and (ii) regulate such organisations in accordance with the law, including considering prohibiting their continued operation;

(2) of the estimated expenditure/actual expenditure on promoting the Constitution and the Basic Law in the current financial year and each of the past five financial years; the respective amounts allocated to secondary and primary schools; and

(3) whether the Government conducted any promotion and education activities in the past two years specifically for disseminating messages against Hong Kong independence and secession; if so, of the names and expenditure of the activities; if not, whether it will consider launching such activities?

Reply:

President,

After consulting the Security Bureau, the Education Bureau (EDB) and the Home Affairs Bureau (HAB), our consolidated reply to the Hon Tony Tse'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) form the constitutional basis of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR). The HKSAR Government has the responsibility to encourage the general public to have a comprehensive understanding of the Constitution and the Basic Law. The Preamble of the Basic Law states clearly that Hong Kong has been part of the territory of China since ancient times. Upholding national unity and territorial integrity, maintaining the prosperity and stability of Hong Kong, and taking account of its history and realities, the People's Republic of China (PRC) has decided that upon China's resumption of the exercise of sovereignty over Hong Kong, a HKSAR will be established in accordance with the provisions of Article 31 of the Constitution.

Article 1 of the Basic Law clearly points out that the HKSAR is an inalienable part of the PRC. Article 12 of the Basic Law also clearly elucidates that the HKSAR shall be a local administrative region of the PRC, which shall enjoy a high degree of autonomy and come directly under the Central People's Government. Therefore, Hong Kong has always been an inalienable part of China.

In Hong Kong, every person or organisation must abide by the laws of Hong Kong. If any act of an organisation is regulated by the laws of Hong Kong, the relevant authorities will deal with it in accordance with the law based on the actual circumstances and evidence. According to section 8 of the Societies Ordinance, the Secretary for Security may prohibit the operation or continued operation of any society if it is necessary in the interests of national security or public safety, public order or the protection of the rights and freedoms of others.

In respect of the promotion of the Constitution and the Basic Law, there are five working groups under the Basic Law Promotion Steering Committee (BLPSC) led by the Chief Secretary for Administration, including the Working Group on Local Community; the Working Group on Teachers and Students; the Working Group on Civil Servants; the Working Group on Industrial, Commercial and Professional Sectors; and the Working Group on Community Outside Hong Kong. HAB, EDB, the Civil Service Bureau, the Trade and Industry Department and the Information Services Department provide secretariat support to the five working groups respectively and assist the working groups in planning and organising activities to promote the Constitution and the Basic Law to the respective sectors.

The Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau (CMAB) spent about \$16 million in each of the four financial years from 2013-14 to 2016-17 for promoting the Constitution and the Basic Law. In 2017-18, the relevant expenditure was \$17 million. In 2018-19, the CMAB has set aside about \$17 million for organising various activities to promote a more comprehensive and thorough public understanding of the Constitution and the Basic Law. We have

placed equal emphasis on the concepts of "one country" and "two systems" in our Basic Law publicity and promotional activities, and has not specifically earmarked dedicated provision for disseminating messages against Hong Kong independence and secession.

For school education, EDB all along has been helping students to understand the Constitution and the Basic Law, the origin of the principle of "one country, two systems" and the relevance of the Basic Law to the daily lives of the people of Hong Kong through the curriculum and learning activities.

EDB continuously reviews and updates the relevant contents of various Key Learning Areas/ subjects as well as organises diversified activities to promote the Constitution and the Basic Law. In addition, EDB develops learning and teaching resources for schools' flexible use, strengthens the training of principals and teachers, and develops Basic Law online courses for self-learning, etc.

As the above work areas are the day-to-day curriculum development work of EDB, the staffing resources and the major part of the expenditure are subsumed under the recurrent expenditure of EDB. There is no separate breakdown of the expenditure for the promotion of the Basic Law in primary and secondary schools.

For young people, the Working Group on Local Community under the BLPSC works closely with HAB and the Committee on the Promotion of Civic Education (CPCE) to promote the Constitution and the Basic Law at the community level. Activities with young people as target participants include Basic Law Quiz Competitions, Basic Law seminars, publications for young people, thematic exhibitions on and interactive games about the Basic Law in the Civic Education Resource Centre, etc.

In addition, HAB and CPCE grant sponsorship every year through the Community Participation Scheme and the Co-operation Scheme with District Councils to support civic education activities to be held in the community, including Constitution and Basic Law promotional activities targeting at young people.

The Government will continue to promote a more comprehensive and thorough public understanding of the Constitution and the Basic Law by organising activities through various means.