

Information note re BBC News Online item: Hong Kong: Children to be taught about national security law www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-55948773

Dear Mr Dore,

Your online news item (Hong Kong: Children to be taught about national security law www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-55948773) shows a profound misunderstanding of the objectives of the guidelines recently circulated to Hong Kong schools by Hong Kong's Education Bureau. Please thus allow me to provide the following background information.

Hong Kong is an inalienable part of the People's Republic of China which enjoys a high degree of autonomy under the "One Country, Two Systems" principle as defined in the Basic Law. Safeguarding national sovereignty, security and development interests is the constitutional duty of the HKSAR, as well as the common responsibility of all Hong Kong residents, including school staff, parents and students.

The National Security Law is enacted for the purpose of preventing, suppressing and imposing punishment for acts and activities that endanger national security. In particular, preventive efforts should be accorded priority in order to minimise the need for suppression and punishment. As far as prevention and education are concerned, schools have a significant role to play.

Upon request of the school sector, a circular with guidelines was issued by the Education Bureau to assist schools (at kindergarten, primary and secondary level) to carry out their educational duties in relation to the National Security Law, with a view to maintaining a safe and orderly learning environment in schools for students' effective learning and healthy development. The guidelines serve as a handy reference in areas of school administration, staff management and training, learning and teaching, student guidance, discipline and support as well as home-school co-operation, etc. and provide an overall framework, whilst schools may devise their own school-based strategies and plans on that basis. Amongst these measures, school should ensure that all school staff uphold professional ethics, abide by the law and observe codes of conduct acceptable to society; step up the prevention and suppression of teaching or other school activities that are in breach of the Basic Law, the National Security Law and all laws applicable to Hong Kong; preventing political or other illegal activities from permeating schools; and help students gain a correct understanding of the National Security Law and the important concepts covered by national security.

Admittedly national security is a relatively new concept in Hong Kong, but learning elements related to national identity and national security have long been incorporated in different subjects. National security education should be implemented through an integrated approach to enhance students' sense of national identity affection for Chinese people and culture, as well as their awareness of and sense of responsibility for safeguarding national security through relevant subjects and life-wide learning activities. The statement that "children as young as six are to learn about crimes under Hong Kong's national security law" is a misinterpretation of the curriculum.

Every country has a different approach to national education and national security issues, and we regret that there have been so many biased statements and accusations, which can only be attributed to the lack of understanding and respect for Hong Kong's implementation plan.

For further information, please visit the press release:

<https://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/202102/04/P2021020400806.htm>

Alasdair Crewe

Head of PR

Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office, London