COMMENTHK

Yang Sheng

Indelible culpability of the teachers' union

Yang Sheng says the HKPTU poisons the minds of students with bias toward the CPC, Chinese mainland compatriots

The National Security Law for Hong Kong has proved effective, with the separatist sum of all anti-China troublemaking forces known as the Hong Kong Alliance in Support of Patriotic Democratic Movements of China now falling apart because of its subversive nature. Fearing that they could be prosecuted next, most member groups lost little time in abandoning the alliance. Among them is the Hong Kong Professional Teachers' Union, which officially dropped out of the alliance at the end of last month.

The HKPTU has been a major driving force of the subversive agenda pursued by the alliance, earning a lot of praise and support from hostile Western powers for preaching separatism and unlawful behavior in secondary and even primary schools under the guise of education. It has poisoned the minds of many students with blind prejudice and bias toward the Communist Party of China and Chinese mainland compatriots. As a result, hundreds of schoolchildren were arrested for participating in illegal assemblies and/or for criminal vandalism in recent years. Some of them were caught red-handed preparing for terrorist attacks this year. As an "influential" player with bragging rights among member groups of the alliance, the HKPTU simply has too much dirty laundry to hide or deny and had no choice but to abandon the ship that is the alliance, even though it was already too late.

Luo Huining, director of the Liaison Office of the Central People's Government in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, concluded in a speech this year that those clamoring for "an end to one-party rule (in China)" would destroy the foundation of "one country, two systems" and were the real enemies of Hong Kong society. Over the years, the alliance made blatant attempts to subvert the fundamental system of China by organizing various, often illegal, activities to fuel hatred toward or misgivings about the State as well as to undermine national security and harm Hong Kong's stability and prosperity along the way. Furthermore, the shady and messy relations between the alliance and the HKPTU, which advertises itself as the largest educational organization in Hong Kong, inevitably attract ample suspicion of criminal deals over subversive activities.

The HKPTU and the alliance used to share the same core group of members and therefore, the alliance borrowed the venue of the HKPTU to hold most of its activities in the past. For instance, it was reported that in May, the executive members of the alliance held a secret meeting with leading members of the HKPTU at the latter's headquarters in Mong Kok. The HKPTU also allegedly let the alliance use its bank account for funds raised locally and overseas. It encouraged schools and like-minded groups to join the subversive activities. After so many years of collusion they are practically inseparable, to the point that HKPTU President Fung Wai-wah vowed that the HKPTU's political standing would not change after leaving the alliance. There is no way the HKPTU can ever convince the public or the relevant authorities it now has nothing to do with the alliance.

The HKPTU has, since its establishment, used its look as a professional education workers' union to inflame anti-China sentiment among students. The offenses it has committed are too numerous to count and the HKPTU has become one of the main roots that sprouted many riots in Hong Kong. Let's not forget pernicious ideas such as "Hong Kong independence", "city-state theory", "achieving justice by violating the law", etc., promoted within and beyond the education sector in the name of "free speech" and "academic freedom". The HKPTU also compiled textbooks of liberal studies to slander "one country, two systems", in a bid to fuel animosity between Hong Kong and the mainland by poisoning the minds of innocent schoolchildren.

Although it has been more than a year since the enactment of the National Security Law, the PTU Promising Bookstore in Mong Kok is selling books that glorify the criminal behavior of participants in the "black revolution" of June 2019 through June 2020. Meanwhile, the HKPTU has gone out of its way to stigmatize and demonize national education, because patriotism is a threat to its control over the education profession, obviously. In doing so, it has victimized numerous students by depriving them of basic knowledge beneficial to their healthy development and future success as upright and responsible residents. As a result, some students became mindless pawns damaging the overall interest of Hong Kong society for the profit of the anti-China forces.

During the "black revolution", the HKPTU not only defended teachers who hurled hateful verbal abuse at the Police Force but also repeated unfounded claims of "police brutality" while turning a blind eye to violent attacks by some students against police officers performing their duty of maintaining public order. Recently, the Hong Kong University Students' Union Council passed a motion to mourn and appreciate a lone-wolf terrorist who stabbed himself to death after seriously wounding a police officer without provocation. Naturally, the incident attracted overwhelming public condemnation of "mutual destruction" advocates who incite domestic terrorism on a daily basis, but the HKPTU chose to remain quiet for obvious reasons, not the least being its long-held hatred of law enforcement authorities.

The author is a current affairs commentator. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

#hk24hr

Editor's note: *China Daily Hong Kong Edition has launched a photo-sharing campaign on Instagram. You can share your photos by tagging #hk24hr, and we'll choose the best ones to publish in the newspaper.*

Having a ball

Children at Harbour City pose for photos next to giant sculptures of the iconic Pixar ball and lamp during the Pixar Fest exhibition, which is celebrating the 35th anniversary of Pixar Animation Studios. The exhibition runs through Sunday. RAYMOND CHAN / CHINA DAILY

Louis Ng

Shaping a connected palace museum within Hong Kong

The Hong Kong Palace Museum is due to open in July 2022, after five years in the making. The 900 works of art to be displayed are all gems of Beijing's Palace Museum's collection. A loan of this size is unprecedented in the history of the Beijing's museum since its establishment in 1925, signifying a strategic partnership between the two institutions.

As the third palace museum in China, how will the HKPM differentiate itself from its counterparts in Beijing and Taipei in terms of vision and positioning? The idea of a "connected museum" captures the distinct identity and role of the HKPM in advocating for a new paradigm for the interpretation of Chinese art and culture. In this context, the concept of connection has multiple meanings.

The HKPM will connect the past to the present, helping us understand who we are and how we came to be. It will not be a shrine containing works of art for people to worship. Instead, it will provide contemporary connections to works of art and historical objects in relation to modern life. Through storytelling, the museum will spark interest, encourage audiences to explore and contemplate, create meaning by connecting the objects on display to lived experiences, and help visitors internalize the history and culture of the Palace Museum. By providing this modern-day connection, the HKPM will serve as a catalyst for creativity and a place to bring traditional Chinese art and history into our modern lives.

The second connection is hyper-connectivity. Digital culture and technology are changing the way we experience and consume content, as well as the ways in which we interact with one another. As a forward-looking museum, the HKPM is committed to collaborating closely with artists, educators, designers, and the creative and technology sectors to open up new ways of learning and experiencing art and culture. The museum will do this through cultivating immersive storytelling, creating a digitally embedded museum environment, and engaging with many forms of digital content. We will tap into the enormous potential of digital technology and social media to engage with new audiences, explore collections in a new light, transform online learning, and, ultimately, rethink the entire visitor experience. This will enable us to meet the societal challenges of a networked and mediated culture more effectively.

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The HKPM will also strengthen its connections with Chinese mainland museums and audiences, leveraging Hong Kong's deeper integration within the overall development strategy of the country. Strategic partnerships will be established with major museums on the mainland for the purpose of collaboration and resource sharing, which will have mutual benefits. Cultural resources drawn from our partnering museums will be capitalized on to help students and young people in Hong Kong better understand Chinese history and culture, which will help forge a sense of national identity. The HKPM will also take advantage of the developmental opportunities of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area. With a population of over 72 million, the Greater Bay Area has huge market potential, presenting opportunities for the HKPM to expand its audience base and promote patronage. The museum in turn will promote mutual trust and understanding within the Greater Bay Area, as we work toward a shared vision and set of values.

Finally, the HKPM aspires to connect Chinese culture with a global audience. The museum is well-positioned to play a key role in supporting Hong Kong's efforts to become an art and culture hub that forms a bridge between China and the rest of the world — as envisioned in the nation's 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-25), released in March. It will further international cooperation through strategic cultural partnerships, traveling exhibitions on world civilizations, collaborative research, and professional training programs. The museum is already well on its way to this, having reached out to over 70 major museums around the world in the interests of establishing a robust international network of partners. The HKPM's multicultural team is composed of distinguished scholars and curators with diverse cultural backgrounds. They are well-suited to overcoming language and cultural barriers when communicating with international audiences, which will make the museum's exhibitions and other offerings more engaging, inclusive, and accessible to all.

The world is undergoing a period of change unprecedented in modern history. To meet new global challenges, China is advocating for a vision of equality, mutual learning, dialogue, and inclusiveness between nations. Museums are important carriers of culture, history and values — powerhouses that can contribute to building a community with a shared future for mankind. The HKPM, as China's global museum, is committed to playing a role in this endeavour. Let's stay connected.

The author is director of the Hong Kong Palace Museum. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

HK Thoughts

HK tourism need not lose contact with residents' everyday reality

Alex Rong
The author is a Hong Kong-based journalist.

The yearlong lockdown has revealed how much Hong Kong relies on its fluidity. Inbound tourism has ground to a halt, leaving the hospitality and retail industries gasping for air. Outward-looking travelers have been confined within the city's stretches of green mountain trails, strips of socially distanced beaches, and specks of art exhibitions. The tempered wanderlust found eager expression in the long queues outside Haw Par Mansion, when people flocked to the recently opened "Tiger Balm Garden" built in 1935 by the Burmese Chinese tycoon Aw Boon Haw.

For an international city that draws its strengths from the free flow of all elements, the prolonged isolation has thrust the structural defects of its tourism industry to the fore. The hiatus should force a reimagining of the tourism sector, and set the course for a more livable city for residents and a more attractive destination for visitors.

Hong Kong's reputation as a "shopping paradise" lured multitudes of lavish spenders, but the crowds were sometimes considered a nuisance by some residents. The city's compact size has made people highly sensitive to any intrusion on the narrow streets and vertical malls. In 2018, before the disruptive social unrest and pandemic, the visitors-to-residents ratio was 9-to-1, much higher than Singapore's 3-to-1 and Tokyo's 1-to-1, according to an October 2020 report by the Bauhinia Foundation Research Centre. The tension this caused has been politicized to breed hostility toward the Chinese mainland, as mainland tourists have accounted for over 75 percent of total arrivals since 2014.

The steady stream of liberal spenders brought in huge revenue, but it also pulled the cityscape further away from residents' everyday needs. It is also a disincentive to upgrade and diversify services. The lethargy has come home to roost. Hong Kong's tourism competitiveness slid eight places in 2007-19 in the World Economic Forum index.

Another example of the mismatch can be found in the ironic fact that much of Hong Kong's appeal as a tourism hub speaks to some residents' unspeakable plight. Visitors on the hunt for the neon signs in their favorite Hong Kong films typically stop for rundown tenement buildings that date back decades. Facility upgrades in those buildings have stalled as has the golden age of Hong Kong cinema long drawn to a close. If the dingy corridors in Wong Kar-wai's *In the Mood for Love* (2000) were imbued with romantic ambivalence, the Chungking Mansions but a symbol of dangerous desires, this dreamlike veneer has now been replaced by quiet despair.

The "Monster Building" in Quarry Bay is such an example. The massive structure gained dubious fame from starring in Hollywood blockbusters such as in the dystopian world in *Ghost in the Shell*. A National Geographic article says: "Built as public housing in the 1960s, this gargantuan E-shaped edifice, which featured in Michael Bay's 2014 *Transformers: Age of Extinction*, looks like a humongous game of *Tetris*." As exotic as it may be to tourists, the shoebox-like apartments, whose narrow windows dot the building facades to the edges, don't make for quality living. In fact, the conditions that constitute people's daily lives have become so surreal that they make for a spectacle. The edifice reduces people to midgets before monstrous capital. It estranges and repels the inhabitants from the city they live in as it keeps reinforcing the harsh reality that many will never be able to own a home.

Hong Kong has built much of its fame on conditions that were hostile to its inhabitants. How to balance the need to remake its landscape and preserve the city's history, as it did on a much smaller scale with the crime-ridden Kowloon City? This task will be a test of will and wisdom. To find a new calling card — one that is uniquely Hong Kong and at the same time promotes quality living for the people — a thorough search into its history and a clear vision of the future are needed.

The tourism heyday was rooted in a booming economy and thriving popular culture. Hong Kong cinema has since been eclipsed by ever-expanding studios overseas that tilted the game toward big-capital players. The city's primary attractions, Ocean Park and Disneyland, are losing allure as larger amusement parks keep springing up on the mainland. Meanwhile, the Hainan Free Trade Zone is hastening a market reconfiguration in South China.

While Hong Kong tackles these challenges, the ever-ingenious Hong Kong people are searching for answers. During the pandemic, people have been scouring for less-beaten hiking trails, discovering hidden gems, and exploring the sea.

They bike on tracks that wind through the city's quieter corners, testing the possibility of reinventing the Hong Kong Cyclothon race. There have long been calls to connect all island promenades into a "Hong Kong Island Coastal Trail". Bikers would bowl down along a 65-kilometer circular route, which would take them to historical sites, beaches, hiking trails, etc. If not enough to tempt tourists, the tracks would be good for an evening stroll, fishing and jogging, and would supply weekend entertainment for local bikers.

Hong Kong's tourism may well find its future in residents' pursuit of their own lifestyle. The city's fluidity caters well to the shifting needs from outside. But it easily neglects residents' daily struggles, risking losing its character. The worst name for Hong Kong would be as a passing dystopian setting in an exotic gaze.

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