

Summer camps seen as propaganda

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The Ministry of Education is coming under fire from Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) lawmakers for helping facilitate summer exchange programs between Chinese and Taiwanese schools, which they claim are part of China's "united front" tactics.

The ministry on Thursday promoted the exchanges in its online newsletter, and the National Museum of Natural Science is among the institutions involved in the exchanges, but the ministry should be worried about China "infiltrating schools" across the nation, DPP legislator Wang Ding-yu (王定宇) and Huang Kuo-shu (黃國書) said on Monday.

National Taiwan Normal University, National Chengchi University and National Tsing Hua University are among the public schools that have been promoting summer camps on their Web sites since March, the legislators said.

Soochow University has a list of 28 activities and Chinese Culture University lists 33 on their Web sites, among other private schools, the legislators said.

Chinese Culture University is even using the slogan "Hearts connected and hands joined, both sides of the Strait feel like compatriots" to promote its programs, they said.

The China Youth Corps is participating in a program organized by the China Youth Culture Foundation for Mainland Studies, which would see 50 Taiwanese enrolled in film and television study programs visiting China for eight days for just NT\$5,000 per person, including airfare, they said.

A summer science camp for high-school students sponsored by China's Association for Science and Technology and the Chinese Ministry of Education would be attended by 220 students and teachers from 40 Taiwanese schools, they said.

Several top schools, such as Taipei Municipal Jianguo High School, Taipei First Girls' High School and Taichung Municipal Taichung First Senior High School, were asked by China to

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help choose students for the camp, the legislators said.

A “nature exploration” camp that has become an annual cross-strait event, which was held last year at the Museum of Natural History in Zhejiang, China, is scheduled to be held at the National Museum of Natural Science in Taichung, with the Chinese government subsidizing the airfare for Chinese students, the legislators said.

The director of the museum in Zhejiang, Yan Hongming (顏洪明), was quoted by Chinese media last year as saying: “The people of both sides of the Taiwan Strait are of a common origin, and the blood of youth is thicker than water. I hope to see increased acknowledgment of [both sides’ shared] ethnicity,” the lawmakers said.

The camp event at the Taichung museum has been organized by the museum’s cultural and educational foundation, which will also decide the activities, the ministry said, adding that the government has no involvement.

The “nature exploration” camp program has been run for 10 years and allows Chinese students visiting Taiwan to experience freedom and democracy, and Taiwanese students visiting China to see archeological sites and artifacts, the ministry said.

It was a “normal cross-strait cultural and educational exchange,” the ministry said.

However, Wang said that the eight years of former president Ma Ying-jeou’s (馬英九) Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) administration caused education administrators to lose awareness of national security concerns.

Correcting this lapse would be one of the most important tasks of future education ministers, he said.

Huang said that China’s subsidization of travel expenses for Taiwanese students and Chinese officials meeting with the students from the moment they arrive in China are clear proof that such exchanges are being used for “united front” aims.

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