

Schools to teach Nanjing is ROC capital: ministry

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A Ministry of Education circular describing Nanjing as the Republic of China's capital and Taipei as the current seat of its central government is shown in a photo posted on Facebook yesterday by National Taipei University of Education professor Lee Hsiao-feng.

Photo downloaded from Lee Hsiao-feng's Facebook page

A government document ordering schools' procurement of teaching materials that mark Nanjing as the capital of the Republic of China (ROC) and Taipei as the current location of the central government indicated President Ma Ying-jeou's (馬英九) administration's persistent attempts to promote the links between Taiwan and China, as well as the administration's misinterpretation of the Constitution, lawmakers and academics said yesterday.

A photograph posted by National Taipei University of Education professor Lee Hsiao-feng (李蕭峰) on Facebook yesterday, which showed a Ministry of Education document issued on Monday to schools nationwide, went viral on the Internet.

"The document reflects the Ma administration's ideology and its state of mind as a government-in-exile, which the majority of Taiwanese do not agree with. We should not be surprised because Ma has always tried to go against the trend," Lee said.

The professor said the photo was taken by one of his students, who is a teacher.

"Although Taiwan and mainland China have been marked with different colors in the textbook, Nanjing should be the ROC capital and Taipei is the current location of the central government, according to the ROC Constitution," the document said.

Due to universal standards in map legends, Taipei would still be marked as the capital on the maps in teaching materials, but teachers are obligated to clearly explain the complexity of the situation to their students, the ministry said in the document, which was sent to high schools, vocational schools, junior-high schools and elementary schools across the country, except for

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those in Taipei, Greater Kaohsiung and New Taipei City (新北市).

Lee said that Ma has been trying to sinicize teaching materials, for example by insisting on referring to the period during which Taiwan was a Japanese colony as the “Japanese occupation period” in high-school textbooks.

Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) Legislator Lee Chun-yi (李俊毅) said the Constitution does not designate any city as the capital.

“Ma has been using the Constitution as a political tool to link Taiwan with China and to endorse his initiative of ‘one country, two regions.’ Everyone knows it’s nonsense and his interpretation of cross-strait relations is far from reality,” Lee Chun-yi said.

Under Ma’s leadership, government officials’ interpretation of the nation’s status has been “absurd,” he added, citing the example of Mongolian and Tibetan Commission Minister Tsai Yu-ling (蔡育玲), who recently said that Mongolia remains ROC territory.

Ma has been inconsistent, DPP Legislator Chen Chi-mai (陳其邁) said, as he said he wanted to “make Taipei a world-class capital city” when he served as Taipei mayor.

The DPP administration between 2000 and 2008 reiterated that Taipei is the ROC capital, Chen said.

“Judging by a series of policy changes during the Ma administration, it has been engaging in a ‘de-Taiwanization campaign’ in an attempt to brainwash students and to force Ma’s ‘one China’ ideology upon young people,” Chen said.

Later yesterday, the ministry official in charge of the matter said he would take full administrative responsibility for not making the ministry’s intent clear in the document.

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The head of the ministry's K-12 Education Administration Division, Chiu Chien-kuo (邱建國), said that during the Period of Political Tutelage (蔣經國時期), it had been mentioned that the capital of the nation was Nanjing, but there was no such mention in the Constitution after its ratification.

Since the implementation of the Act Governing Principles for Editing Geographical Educational Texts (地理教育文本編輯原則) in 1997, the guiding principle for all maps in geographical textbooks was that Taipei was to be marked as the capital with a label stating: "Location of Central Government," Chiu said.

The part in the ministry's document mentioning Nanjing did not provide a detailed explanation, for which he extended his apology, saying he was willing to assume responsibility for any administrative lapse, he added.

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