



China Reform Monitor No. 1481

October 25, 2021 **Joshua Eisenman**

Related Categories: Democracy and Governance; Human Rights and Humanitarian Issues; Islamic Extremism; China; Hong Kong; Pakistan; Taiwan

HARVARD BEIJING ACADEMY MOVES TO TAIPEI

Starting next summer, the Harvard Beijing Academy study abroad program will move from the Beijing Language and Culture University to National Taiwan University. According to Program Director Jennifer Liu, the move to Taipei came in response to "a lack of friendliness from their Chinese host institution." In recent years, Harvard has had difficulty getting classrooms and dorms, which forced the program to split students into two different dorms or to find a hotel to keep students together. "Given the conditions they provided, we really couldn't run the program with the quality that we are hoping to deliver to our students," Liu said. In past years, on July 4th students and faculty would gather to eat pizza and sing the national anthem. But, in 2019, the university cancelled the gathering. "We were told that our students were not allowed to sing, to celebrate," Liu said. (*The Crimson*, October 7, 2021)

U OF HK ORDERS REMOVAL OF STATUE COMMEMORATING TIANANMEN PROTESTS

The University of Hong Kong has ordered the removal of a statue commemorating the 1989 Tiananmen crackdown. The Pillar of Shame, by Danish sculptor Jens Galschiot, depicts dozens of torn and twisted bodies and was at the forefront of vigils held in the city to commemorate the 1989 crackdown. The university said the decision to remove the statue, which has stood on the university's campus for 24 years, was "based on the latest risk assessment and legal advice." It said the statue would be deemed "abandoned" if it was not removed from the campus. (BBC, October 8, 2021)

[EDITOR'S NOTE: The 1989 Tiananmen Square protests remain a censored topic in China. The anniversary was marked annually in Hong Kong until it was banned by authorities in 2020. This year, nine pro-democracy activists were sentenced to between 6-10 months in prison for taking part in the 2020 vigil.]

TIGHT FUNDING, FACILITY SHORTAGES TOP LIST OF EDUCATION CHALLENGES

The self-evaluation reports of China's provinces reveal public schools and kindergartens need more funding and teachers to alleviate large class sizes and provide more slots for students. The reports, which review the provinces' educational performance, note a growing demand for public education. Many provinces, including Guangdong, Zhejiang, Henan, Hunan, Anhui, Guangxi and Qinghai, pointed to shrinking public education budgets. Last year in Henan, due to a shortage of 100,000 kindergarten teachers, the percentage of children attending public kindergartens was just 33.5% – well behind the State Council target of 50%. Another common problem are imbalances between urban and rural areas, where teacher pay is low. By 2025, Guangdong alone will add 4.38 million spots for public schooling, including 330,000 in kindergartens, 3.75 million in primary and middle schools, and 300,000 in high school, requiring more than 250,000 new teachers. (Caixin, October 14, 2021)

XI PUSHES PROPERTY TAX LEGISLATION

In an essay in the official CPC journal *Qiushi*, Xi Jinping has called for China to "vigorously and steadily advance" legislation to create a property tax. Beijing has long mulled such a tax, but has faced resistance from local governments and other stakeholders who fear it would erode property values or even trigger a sell-off. Proponents argue the tax would curb real estate speculation, and point to the risks caused by the defunct property developer China Evergrande Group. Xi also warned against over-promising on social welfare and said China should avoid the "trap" of "welfarism" by helping lazy people. "The government cannot take care of everything," while the "ossification" of social classes should be prevented. So should "lying flat," said Xi, referring to a growing trend among China to embrace passivity. Salaries of grassroots-level officials and workers at state-owned enterprises should be increased, he added. (Reuters, October 15, 2021)

CHINA PROVIDES ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL SUPPORT TO THE TALIBAN

The Taliban is arresting the leaders, members, and sympathizers of Uighur and Baloch separatist groups in Afghanistan in exchange for support from Beijing and Islamabad. In Kandahar, the Taliban are forcing Baloch families to leave their houses and taking their cars under the pretext that they support the terrorist group ISIS-K. "In return for their actions against Baloch separatists and removing Uyghur insurgents, the Taliban expect economic support, development cooperation and humanitarian assistance from Islamabad and Beijing, which Afghanistan directly needs at this juncture," said Abdul Basit of the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies in Singapore. Beijing will give the Taliban \$31 million and Pakistan will provide their nascent government with technical support in the banking and commerce sectors. Last month, Foreign Minister Wang Yi urged his fellow G20 ministers to unfreeze Afghanistan's foreign assets, lift economic sanctions, and stop exerting "political pressure" on the Taliban. (Nikkei Asia, October 15, 2021)