The Central and Local Governments Work Together to Improve Power

System for Installation of Air-conditioners

Each Classroom Will be Air-conditioned by 2022

(Courtesy of Tsai, I-Ching at the Division of Preschool Education)



Premier Soo, Tsing-Tshiong visited the Baihe Elementary School in Tainan City on July 7, 2020 to inspect the outcomes of the old school building renovation at elementary and junior high schools, and listened to the presentation given by Pan, Wen-Chung, Minister of Education, on the improvement of the old school buildings, the improvement of the power system, and the air-conditioning installation planning at senior high schools and below. Premier Soo announced on the spot that the Executive Yuan would allocate a total of NT\$32.3 billion to support the Ministry of Education to improve the power system and install air-conditioners at senior high schools and below through allocation of tax revenue and the second phase of the forward-looking infrastructure construction program, while requiring the Ministry of Education to complete the projects before the summer of 2022, so that students in the summer of 2022, both in urban and rural areas, could study in air-conditioned classrooms.

Taiwan is located in the circum-Pacific seismic zone and is threatened by earthquake disasters at any time. In order to safeguard school teachers and students' safety, the Ministry of Education has implemented an earthquake resistance improvement programs for old school buildings in multiple phases. Minister Pan stated in the presentation that in the last two phases, namely from 2017 to 2019 and from 2020 to 2022, NT\$42.1 billion would be invested to complete the reinforcement of 3,036 school buildings at elementary and junior high schools as well as the demolition and construction of 369 school buildings; as such, the earthquake resistance of school buildings at senior high schools and below across the country would be thoroughly improved by the year of 2022. The overall school building improvement project of the Baihe Elementary School was carried out during these two phases. Moreover, the school building built with the assistance offered by the United States after the Great Baihe Earthquake was demolished and a new building was built for the students in this phase of the program, which served as a good model to emulate from, was a focal point for on-site inspection today.

In his speech, Premier Soo said that under the leadership of President Tsai, he had two expectations for schools when he came back to take over as the Premier last year: one was safety and the other was comfort. He witnessed the losses caused by earthquakes in Taiwan multiple times and understood the importance of improving the earthquake resistance of buildings. The earthquake resistance improvement programs for school buildings implemented by the Ministry of Education was tested by the earthquake that occurred in Tainan on February 6, 2018 and Hualien on April 18, 2019, respectively, and the main structures of the school buildings covered in this program near the epicenter were not damaged. After he took office, he approved a budget of NT\$16.6 billion on April 18 to complete the earthquake-resistance improvement of old school buildings at public senior high, junior high, and elementary schools during the last three years (2020-2022) of the program. The Baihe Elementary School demolished the school building built with the assistance from the United States after the Baihe Earthquake and built a new school building for the students using its own money. Therefore, he said "Today's visit to the Baihe Elementary School aims to tell our citizens and parents that we have improved the school buildings so that our 2.16 million children can study in a safe environment."

Affected by the extreme weather and high temperatures in the summer, people from all walks of life are concerned about the issue of installing air-conditioners at schools. At the second meeting of the 1st provisional session of the 10th term of the Legislative Yuan, the "Proposal for the Budget Preparation for the Following Four Years" was reviewed and passed, the attached resolutions regarding installation of air-conditioning equipment and power improvement were adopted. Therefore, Minister Pan also reported on the plans of the Ministry of Education to the Premier as he put forward a a budget of NT\$32.3 billion for power system improvement and air-conditioner installation. He further pointed out that it was estimated the power system improvement for 100,000 classrooms and the installation and replacement of air-conditioners in 103,000 classrooms would be completed by 2023, and that the percentage of air-conditioners installed at junior high and elementary schools would increase from the current 37% to 100%, and the percentage at senior high and vocational schools would below would be air-conditioned.

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After listening to Minister Pan's presentation, Premier Soo stressed that both safety and comfort should be taken into consideration, and that the Executive Yuan would provide full support through the allocation of tax revenue and the second phase of the forward-looking infrastructure construction program. He also required the Ministry of Education to complete the power system improvement and installation of air-conditioners at public senior high schools and below before the summer of 2022, so that all students could study in the air-conditioned classroom during the summer of 2022, while instructing the Ministry of Education and Taipower to assist the schools in planning and making improvement. Due to the huge amount of funds required, Premier Soo also specifically asked the Directorate-General of Budget, Accounting and Statistics and the National Development Council to allocate the required funds in the second phase of the forward-looking infrastructure construction program. Regarding Minister Pan's concern about reducing the city and county governments' financial burden of and students' burden of electricity fees, Premier Soo also announced that the percentage of the subsidies should be increased in accordance with the Ministry of Education's plans so as to reduce the cities and counties' financial burden, and that the electricity fees incurred from the air-conditioners installed at elementary and junior high schools should also be included in the calculation of general subsidies of the Executive Yuan.

In addition, Premier Soo instructed Li, Meng-Yen, Secretary-General of the Executive Yuan, to form a task force to comprehensively supervise the installation of solar photovoltaic roofs as well as smart energy-saving and cooling equipment at schools, while requesting the Ministry of Education to promote smart energy conservation at schools and formulate fair electricity billing regulations, and the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Taipower to be responsible for improving the external power supply, assisting with inspection of internal power safety, counseling schools to implement smart energy conservation, and coordinating with the responsible association to provide sufficient supply at reasonable prices so as to continue to maintain stable power supply.

The Ministry of Education said that it will work with the local governments to speed up the process according to the timetable set out by Premier Soo. As for power improvement, it will conduct relevant work from the second half of this year and complete it in 2022 in advance, while it plans to complete the installation of all air-conditioners from 2021 to the summer of 2022; as such, everyone can have a temperature-friendly learning environment. The Ministry of Education will also make arrangements in advance, requesting local governments to begin preparing for the inspection of the power system to keep abreast of the situation of each school's power system so as to speed up the improvement work. Furthermore, in order to improve energy efficiency, it will request local governments to purchase energy-saving air-conditioners with reference to the energy efficiency classification label. In the future, cooling mechanisms will also be adopted, including the avoidance of the direct sunlight from the west for the location of outdoor units, use of circulating fans for indoor air-conditioning, and continuous promotion of cooling measures for schools (such as sloping roof, waterproof and thermal insulation, installation of solar panels, and water misters) in order to achieve the effect of smart energy conservation through school power management and energy education. Moreover, relevant new construction or demolition projects will incorporate the design concepts of green buildings and the roof insulation and cooling mechanism, while a space will be reserved for solar photovoltaic installations to achieve the purposes of energy conservation and environmental sustainability for schools.