

The possibility for happiness in HK

中國日報香港版 | 2011-05-31

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Recently, the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences issued a report on urban competitiveness. For the first time, the academy also compiled a “happiness index” of different cities in China.

Hong Kong’s overall competitiveness ranked first among cities in China. Nevertheless, it ranked only 271 in the “happiness index”. The report showed that Shijiazhuang in Hebei ranks No 1 in this index among the 294 cities in China, followed by Yangzhou and Linyi.

Why are Hong Kong people not happy? Why do we have such a low ranking?

Happiness is undeniably the pursuit of human values and the indicator of social progress. But what constitutes happiness? What is the formula for happiness? If happiness becomes the aim of the governmental policy, what kinds of policies are needed?

According to the famous British philosopher Bertrand Russell, our happiness is related to social systems and personal psychology. But how should we assess happiness? The index system of happiness can be found throughout the world, for example, France has a “Happiness Index” and England has a “National Well-being Index System”. They basically include citizen’s income, job satisfaction, health, cultural activities, education, environment, the rights to participate in national issues and the relationships with families and friends and etc.

Admittedly, the government has the responsibility to provide citizens with the objective conditions for a happy life. The government has the responsibility to enhance the well-being of its citizens. It has to provide the conditions necessary for a happy life. We can say that the government can directly and indirectly affect our happiness. The Hong Kong SAR government should establish a scientific well-being indicator to monitor people’s senses of happiness.

Happiness should be one of the indicators for appraising the efficiency of the governmental policies. I hope that the next Chief Executive of Hong Kong will provide a bright “happy list” for citizens. His platform should consist of happy elements.

From the results of the studies of happiness, we can observe that the most important factors which can affect individuals’ well-being are employment, marriage and education. Although the government has limited impact on the marital status of individuals, it can directly affect the policies of employment and education. Not to mention other elements of personal well-being such as safety, environment and cultural lives.

Obviously, if the people of a society are suffering from poverty, insecurity and lack of education, this society will not be a happy one. The enhancement of the well-being of the citizens ought to be an important component of governmental policies.

The pursuit of a happy life is the basic right of every citizen. However, it is also the responsibility of every citizen. Citizens should undertake corresponding obligations and responsibilities when they are pursuing their own happiness. As happiness itself includes individual factors, the government cannot fully replace the responsibility of citizens to find their route to happiness.

Happiness is a joint effort by government and citizens. We must establish the correct scientific concept of happiness, and hope that our happiness ranking will not remain so low.

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