

Mixed reaction as exclusion of pro-Pyongyang school from tuition benefits upheld

- 1) The Tokyo District Court has upheld the exclusion of a pro-Pyongyang Korean school from a high school tuition waiver program that also provides financial assistance for Japan's private and ethnic schools, inciting both criticism and support. (waiver 任意放棄、適用免除)
- 2) In front of the court just after 2:15 p.m. on Sept. 13, the lawyers representing the former students of Tokyo Korean Junior and Senior High School unveiled banners reading "unjust ruling" and "the voices of the Korean high school students go unheard," garnering cries of anger as well as tears from gathered supporters.
- 3) A 19-year-old graduate of the school attending a university in Tokyo commented, "Isn't our right to an education the same as other schools'? I definitely believed we would win, so (the defeat) is frustrating."
- 4) On the day of the ruling, some 1,500 people lined up for tickets to be admitted to the court, but the reading of the decision took only roughly a minute. Speaking to the press after the close of the trial, a 22-year-old female plaintiff said tearfully, "I'm filled with frustration," while another 21-year-old male plaintiff said, "I can't hide my indignation over a ruling that takes away our right to live normally as ethnic Koreans and the smiles and futures of our children. We will keep fighting until we regain our rights."
- 5) "Even though it's clear that the school was excluded from the program for political reasons, the decision failed to take this into account, and did not properly explain the reasoning," said Yoichi Kitamura, the former students' lawyer. "It was a cruel decision."
- 6) "The ruling went against the purpose of the legislation that aims to grant the tuition waiver over a broader spectrum, and was an unjust ruling that follows the one handed down by the Hiroshima District Court in July," said Hitotsubashi University emeritus professor Hiroshi Tanaka, an expert on social issues facing foreign nationals in Japan, especially ethnic Koreans. (spectrum 領域、範囲)
- 7) "This was the first case in which witness testimony was heard from education ministry representatives over the issue, and it's a shame that the court has handed down the ruling while it was showing willingness to listen," he continued. "With an attitude that 'things related to North Korea are dangerous and we can't accept them,' I'm afraid similar decisions will surely follow. I would like judges to make rulings with more composure."
- 8) However, others agreed with the court's decision. Chuo University emeritus professor Kazuhiro Nagao, who specializes in constitutional law, agreed with the reasoning the court used in its decision. "It was a fair ruling when you consider the school's connection to the (pro-Pyongyang) General Association of Korean Residents in Japan (Chongryon). If financial assistance is granted to a Korean school, there is no way to confirm if such assistance is really being used for student tuition."
- 9) Nagao continued that if the government allows for subsidies for the schools, it's the same as condoning the kidnapping of Japanese citizens by the North Korean government. By not granting tuition waivers to Korean schools, "Japan can internationally show its stance against North Korea, and it will surely influence Japan's relations with other countries as well," he said.
- 10) In response to the ruling, a senior Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology official echoed Nagao's sentiments. "The Japanese government cannot give pro-Pyongyang schools financial assistance (awarded to high schools through the waiver program) while the U.N. Security Council has decided on sanctions (on North Korea)," they said, praising the decision as falling in line with the central government's overall policies. "Equal opportunity in education is a completely different subject." (fall in line with～～と共同歩調を取る)【2017-09-14 | Mainichi Japan】

★Icebreaker for active discussion

1. What do you think about the ruling mentioned in the article?
2. What's your opinion about waiving tuition fees for high school students introduced in 2010?
3. What do you think are the challenges of being a non-native student in foreign countries?
4. How do you imagine the relationship between Japan and N.korea will be like in the future?
5. Make sentences using the following words: waiver, spectrum, plaintiff, frustrating, fall in line with and tuition.