

Osaka kindergarten hands out copies of statement slurring ethnic Koreans, Chinese

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OSAKA —

A kindergarten in Osaka city handed out to parents copies of a statement slurring Korean residents in Japan and Chinese people, and its officials were recently questioned for suspected hate speech as a result, prefectural government officials said Thursday.

The statement distributed by Tsukamoto Kindergarten in Yodogawa Ward, operated by Moritomo Gakuen, described Korean residents in Japan and Chinese people as those with “wicked ideas,” calling the latter “shinajin,” a term considered derogatory toward Chinese people.

A prefectural government official questioned the kindergarten principal, Yasunori Kagoike, and his wife, who serves as deputy principal, on Jan 12 after the local government was tipped off by a parent in December. Kagoike also heads the kindergarten operator.

While admitting to distributing the copies to the parents of kindergarten pupils, Kagoike declined to explain the reason for doing so, citing a pending lawsuit, according to the government.

A separate pamphlet distributed to parents in December and obtained by Kyodo News read, “The problem is that people who have inherited the spirit (of Koreans) exist in our country with the looks of Japanese people.”

A parent in her 30s received a handwritten letter from the deputy principal in February last year that bluntly said, “I hate Koreans and Chinese.” The woman, who is ethnically Korean but a naturalized Japanese, pulled her child out of the kindergarten several days later.

Kagoike recently told Kyodo that the kindergarten, known for making its pupils memorize Japan's Imperial Rescript on Education—an 1890 edict that was used to promote militaristic education before and during World War II—is “treating every country equally.”

Moritomo Gakuen, an educational entity, has come under public scrutiny over the purchase of a plot of land owned by the central government in Toyonaka, Osaka, at a price significantly lower than the appraised amount.

The entity bought the 8,770-square-meter plot for 134 million yen (\$1.18 million) last June despite its appraisal price of 956 million yen. The plot is intended for a private elementary school slated to open next April, with Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's wife Akie as its honorary principal.

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