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Alliance sets up \$5m fund for democracy

THE Hongkong Alliance in Support of the Patriotic Democratic Movement in China plans to set up a \$5 million fund to sponsor democratic education.

Revealing this yesterday, alliance chairman Mr Szeto Wah said the organisation now had \$17 million, \$2 million less than shown in the balance sheet released last September.

He said the plan to set up an educational fund would be discussed at a full meeting of the alliance on December 2.

Mr Cheung Man-kwong, a member of the alliance's secretariat, said: "If the proposal is approved we will spend the interest accumulated from the fund to sponsor democratic activities with an educational purpose."

At present, the alliance has a sub-committee that vets applications for funding of such activities organised by other bodies.

So far the 219-strong flagship of the pro-democracy movement has handed out \$200,000 to sponsor democracy-related activities.

Mr Cheung said the proposal was a way to "formalise and systematise" current practices.

He said the future fund would be handled by an

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alliance sub-committee which would vet applications for funds.

He said applicants would have to meet several conditions before any cash is allocated.

"We will consider whether the fund can afford to finance the activity, whether it is meaningful and whether it is in line with our principles," Mr Cheung said.

Most of the money in the fund will be allocated to activities in Hongkong.

The alliance's financial situation, and the way it has handled the \$24 million in donations it received during the May-June student movement in China, has been a point of debate.

Asked how the remainder of the money would be spent by his organisation,

Mr Szeto said: "We still have many things to do in the future."

The alliance will soon be placing the \$12 million in the fund in a fixed deposit.

Speaking at the press conference yesterday, Mr Szeto also reiterated that the alliance had received immense public support.

This was despite recent calls from influential people to disband the body, labelled by the Chinese government as "subversive".

"We strongly feel the support from the general public," Mr Szeto said.

A total of 15 bodies have withdrawn from the democratic flagship group since it was formed in May.

After gaining six new organisations the alliance now has 219 members.

Yesterday, Mr Szeto also announced the alliance's latest move in promoting the democratic movement in China.

It is the publication of a set of Christmas cards.

The cards will contain messages reminding people of the movement.

The message will read: "In memory of those who died in the movement and to pass on people's requests for democracy, freedom and peace."