

80,000 JOIN BOOK ROW

ABOUT 80,000 people signed their names yesterday to protest against the "distortion of history" in Japanese textbooks.

And the number of supporters is expected to soar when the seven-day signature drive ends.

The campaign is organised by the Hongkong Federation of Students.

The president of the federation, Yu Kwok-po, said yesterday they expected to collect 100,000 signatures which they would submit to the Japanese consul.

Yesterday's drive was preceded by a mass rally at the Polytechnic.

More than 400 students and supporters assembled to commemorate the victory of the Chinese over the Japanese after an eight-year occupation by Japanese forces 37 years ago.

There was also a 30-minute slide show depicting Chinese resistance against the Japanese during World War Two.

The slides were followed by a ceremony to pay respects to those who fought and died in China.

Mr Yu said the alteration of the word "invade" to "advance" was an attempt to cover up the atrocities by the Japanese during the war.

He said the federation had written to student bodies in Southeast Asia seeking their support over the textbook row.

During the campaign yesterday, anti-Japanese sentiments were aroused, especially by the older folk when they recalled the hardships they had to bear during the war.

"I was kicked and forced to collect sticks in the mountains when the Japanese came," said Chan Chun, 61. "They should admit that they had done wrong."

The drive was also supported by foreigners.

"I have studied Chinese history before and I think the Japanese should not rewrite the facts," said Abdurahman Saekh-Ishar, a Somali student.

"Even though I don't know what's exactly going on, I just don't want our history to be distorted," said Wong Chun-fai, 10.

The students did, however, fail to get support from certain passers-by.

"How long should we punish a nation by constantly reminding their younger generation of the wrong doings of their ancestors?" said a young man who did not want to be identified.

"And besides, I don't believe the textbook row will lead to the revival of Japanese militarism," he added.

John

*De Star
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