

CHINA

Taiwan urged not to exploit Ukraine crisis

Foreign ministry says comparisons by DPP authorities lack understanding

By ZHANG YI
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Both the Foreign Ministry and the Chinese mainland's Taiwan affairs authorities sternly warned Taiwan politicians on Wednesday not to use the Ukraine crisis to hype up the Taiwan question and make provocations for "independence".

"I think it's unwise for some people with the Taiwan administration to take advantage of the Ukraine situation," Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying said. "Indeed, Taiwan is not Ukraine. It has always been an inalienable part of Chinese territory, which is an irrefutable historical and legal fact."

Hua's comments came after Taiwan authorities compared the situation in Ukraine to the Taiwan question, hoping that the international community will continue to supply the island with weapons to force the Chinese mainland not to "invade" it.

"I've noticed that since the Ukraine crisis broke, some people always tend to link it with Taiwan," Hua said at a regular daily briefing. "What they've said shows they lack very basic understanding of the history of the Taiwan question."

She said the Taiwan question was one left over from the Chinese civil war, but China's sovereignty and territorial integrity have never been, and will never be, divided. "This is the status quo of the Taiwan question," she said.

Hua said peace in Taiwan depends on the peaceful development of cross-Straits relations, not begging for arms sales or military support from outside forces.

"Taiwan independence" can only lead to a dead end, of which no one should have any misunderstanding or misjudgment, she added.

As tensions between Russia and Ukraine mount, Taiwan leader Tsai Ing-wen has expressed

"empathy" for Ukraine's situation and ordered the island's armed forces to stay alert for military activity in the region and strengthen combat readiness.

Ma Xiaoguang, spokesman for the Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council, said on Wednesday that the "empathy" is pure pretense and the Taiwan question is purely China's internal affair. Speaking at a news conference in Beijing, Ma said Taiwan was using the Ukraine situation to hype up "threats" from the mainland and whipping up "anti-China sentiment" on the island, which was purely political manipulation for the selfish interests of one party.

Ma pointed out that the root cause of the current tension across the Taiwan Straits is that the Democratic Progressive Party authorities on the island and "Taiwan independence" forces, in collusion with foreign forces, are constantly making provocations for "independence".

"All necessary actions we have taken to safeguard the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity target separatist activities and foreign interference," he said.

The actions are aimed at fundamentally safeguarding the vital interests of compatriots on both sides of the Straits and the interests of the Chinese nation as a whole, he added.

Ma also denounced the DPP for using foreign forces to campaign for "independence" after the island authorities announced on Monday that former United States secretary of state Mike Pompeo will visit Taiwan next week to meet with Tsai.

"It is nothing but a farce for the DPP to collude with anti-China politicians," he said, adding that some US politicians have been taking wrong actions on the Taiwan question and they are trying to use Taiwan as a pawn to block China's reunification and the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.

to each other, and is creating cross-Straits confrontation under various excuses for the sake of furthering its political interests.

Compatriots in Taiwan participated in the Games in various ways, which was a true reflection that both sides of the Straits are one family, he said.

More than 30 Taiwan students studying at universities in Beijing volunteered during the Games. Mainland and Taiwan musicians composed songs with Winter Olympic themes together, and some Taiwan companies participated in equipment manufacturing for the Games, Ma said.

ZHANG YI

BUILDING THE NEW ERA

Better environment attracts swans, tourists

By ZHAO RUIXUE in Jinan
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Bays and lakes in Rongcheng, Shandong province, are seeing more hustle and bustle than usual as thousands of whooper swans prepare for their journey to Siberia as the weather warms.

"Flapping wings, calling and flying back and forth, the whooper swans used to be quiet, but these days they've become restless," said Liu Zhibin, who has been working at the Rongcheng Swan National Nature Reserve for five years.

The 68-year-old and his wife patrol the reserve twice a day to take care of the swans, including checking on their numbers and whether their living conditions are damaged.

"Some whooper swans have shown signs that they are preparing to set out on their journeys, and most will start migrations in early March," he said.

The 16.7-square-kilometer reserve has several rivers, which makes the site rich in habitat diversity, including tidal flats, an estuary and sandbar lagoon.

Its wetland habitats and abundant aquatic plants and fish are important to migratory water birds, with over 20,000 estimated to visit the reserve each year, according to reserve management.

Thousands of whooper swans migrate annually, including from the Siberian region, and stay in Rongcheng for around five months, making the city one of the largest wintering grounds for whooper swans in the world.

"A sound living environment is attracting more and more swans to spend the winter in Rongcheng," Liu said.

"Changes in the environment are obvious. Ten years ago, sewage and garbage were discharged into lakes and bays. But now, everywhere is clean."

The local government launched a campaign in 2015 to improve sewage treatment and river water quality amid China's efforts to emphasize sound ecological development as a basis for sustainable social and economic development.



A worker feeds whooper swans wintering at the Rongcheng Swan National Nature Reserve in Rongcheng, Shandong province, on Wednesday. YANG ZHILI / FOR CHINA DAILY

As the overall ecological system improved, many swans were seen not only in coastal towns but also in ponds and lakes in downtown Rongcheng, said Yu Bo, deputy head of Rongcheng's Haoyunjiao tourism development bureau.

"The number of places in Rongcheng where whooper swans like to gather has increased to more than 10 from two," Yu said.

People driving along the city's coastline can frequently see flocks of swans foraging for food and preening, he said.

"A good environment can attract more whooper swans to spend winter here and whooper swans will draw more tourists, generating more income for local farmers," Yu said.

More than 30,000 tourists visited Rongcheng to see whooper swans from November to the end of January, generating 6 million yuan (\$950,000) in income, according to the bureau.

"Environmental protection and income growth form a sustaina-



Whooper swans prepare for their migration to Siberia in Rongcheng on Wednesday. YANG ZHILI / FOR CHINA DAILY

ble circle," Yu said.

In addition to whooper swans, thousands of water birds live at the reserve the whole year.

"We must be very careful when we walk through grass during the birds' breeding period because eggs are

hidden everywhere," Liu said.

Liu and his wife have recently been distributing corn where the swans live to provide enough food for those preparing to leave.

"We will be here waiting for them to return," Yu said.

Ministry says secondary vocational schools needed

By ZOU SHUO
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The Ministry of Education has dismissed appeals to abandon the division of students into regular high schools and secondary vocational schools, calling the latter an important part of the country's high school education system.

In China, all middle school graduates need to take the high school enrollment examination to determine which high school they can attend, and the students with lower scores mostly attend secondary vocational schools, leading to social stigma being attached to such schools.

To alleviate the excessive academic burden on primary and middle school students, there have been suggestions that the division of students be ended, letting all students attend high schools.

According to the latest figures from the ministry, the country had more than 16.6 million students at secondary vocational schools in

2020, accounting for almost 40 percent of the students in high school education.

Chen Ziji, director of the ministry's department of vocational and adult education, said on Wednesday that secondary vocational schools can promote diversified development of students and have played an important role in boosting employment, regional economic development and improving people's livelihoods, so it is "very necessary" to continue the division.

The ministry encourages local governments to determine the proportion of students going to vocational schools based on their development situation and demand, Chen said.

Greater efforts should be made to improve the quality of secondary vocational education by allocating more funds, improving school conditions, and cultivating a batch of high-quality and exemplary secondary vocational schools and disciplines, he said.

1,000 secondary vocational schools

rated national-level and high-quality are expected to be built in the next three to five years.

In the next three to five years, the country aims to build around 1,000 national-level high-quality secondary vocational schools, he said.

Rather than finding employment after graduation, secondary vocational school students will be encouraged to further their studies at higher vocational schools through independent enrollment tests, Chen said.

The ministry will also select around 10 higher vocational schools offering bachelor degrees to improve the attractiveness of higher vocational education, he said.

It aims to improve the image of vocational education so that more students and parents will choose

vocational education and employers will be more willing to hire vocational school graduates, Chen added.

Deng Yunfeng, director of the Shandong Provincial Education Department, said that due to the improved quality of secondary vocational education in the province, 29,500 middle school graduates who reached the threshold scores for high schools chose to attend vocational schools last year, and 17,000 high school students switched to vocational schools.

The province has invested more than 33 billion yuan (\$5.2 billion) in building 208 high-quality secondary vocational schools and 296 exemplary disciplines, he said.

A new project expected to cost 9 billion yuan was launched last year to build another 100 high-quality secondary vocational schools and 300 exemplary disciplines, he said.

More than 70 percent of the province's secondary vocational school graduates have chosen to further their studies, Deng said.

Probe of island athlete condemned

Ma Xiaoguang, spokesman for the Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council, condemned the Democratic Progressive Party on Taiwan on Wednesday for launching an investigation of a Chinese Taipei athlete for wearing a Chinese mainland athlete's outfit.

Speed skater Huang Yu-ting posted a video online of herself wearing a mainland athlete's outfit before the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympic Games, which the island authorities claimed was improper.

"It is normal and natural for athletes from both sides to have exchanges and communications," Ma said, adding that it fully exposes that the DPP is unwilling to see compatriots on both sides get close

ZHANG YI

Home care



A nurse checks an elderly woman at the patient's home in Jinan, Shandong province, on Wednesday. More than 15,000 experienced nurses registered on a government-run internet platform have helped some 10,000 bedridden patients in their homes.

GUO XULEI / XINHUA

By HOU LIQIANG
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China will beef up efforts to tap the potential of financial instruments in promoting environmental protection work during the 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-25) period, with tackling climate change one of the priorities, according to the Ministry of Ecology and Environment.

"The country has made great achievements in applying such instruments in the past decade or so. There has been, for example, robust growth in green credit," Sun Shouliang, director of the ministry's comprehensive department, told a news conference on Wednesday.

The balance of the credit reached 15.9 trillion yuan (\$2.5 trillion) last year, compared with 5.2 trillion yuan in 2013, he said. Last year, the balance of green credit in the clean energy industry surpassed 3 trillion yuan.

Sun said tax reductions and exemp-

tions have been important tools in stepping up air pollution control.

In 2020, China's environmental protection tax receipts totaled 20.7 billion yuan, he said, while tax reductions and exemptions for emitters that achieved low emissions reached 10 billion yuan.

Sun said marked progress had been made in promoting a mechanism that protects river basins by compensating upstream areas for their environmental conservation efforts.

In a move to accelerate the establishment of the mechanism in the basins of the country's two main watercourses, he said the central authorities allocated 2 billion yuan to supplement compensation funds related to the Yangtze River last year, and 1 billion yuan for those related to the Yellow River.

He added that support has also been offered to other basins of cross-regional water bodies.

The Chishui River, a major tribu-

tary of the Yangtze that runs across the provinces of Yunnan, Guizhou and Sichuan in Southwest China, is an example.

The three provinces agreed in 2018 to contribute 200 million yuan a year to a fund dedicated to the river's conservation. Under the mechanism, as the region that will gain the least economic benefit from the joint environmental protection efforts, Yunnan will only contribute 10 percent of the fund. When it comes to distribution, however, it will get 30 percent.

In Zhaotong, the only city on the river in Yunnan, the local government has rolled out 11 pollution control projects with support from the compensation fund.

"Thanks to these projects, all areas in the Chishui basin have been preliminarily covered by disposal facilities for domestic waste and sewage," said Zhang Ning, deputy head of the city's environmental authority, add-

ing that the facilities have greatly improved the living environment in the city's rural areas.

Pledging further efforts to improve the country's system for green financial instruments, Sun said, "Under the current circumstances, the role of the market mechanism in motivating environmental protection efforts will be increased."

Aside from rolling out a pilot program for financing aimed at mitigating climate change, the ministry will strive to introduce tax reductions and exemptions for companies that work on carbon capture, utilization and storage, and also improve the country's carbon trading program, which was launched last year.

A credit assessment system based on environmental protection performance will also be established to boost the development of green products, technologies and processes, Sun said.