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A handout photo provided by the Office of the President of Taiwan on 12 July 2016 shows an aerial photograph of Taiping Island, also known as Itu Aba Island in the South China Sea on March 23, 2016.

Photo: EPA

Taiwan yesterday refused to accept a ruling by the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague, Netherlands, which included a statement that Taiwan-controlled Itu Aba Island (Taiping Island, DDD) in the Spratly Islands (Nansha Islands, DDDD) is a "rock," saying the verdict has severely infringed on Taiwan's rights over the South China Sea island and its surrounding waters.

In the case brought by the Philippines against China over their disputes in the South China Sea, the Philippines argued that land formations claimed by Beijing in the South China Sea are not islands and therefore not entitled to 200 nautical mile (370.4km) exclusive economic zones.

While Taiwan was not party to the case, its claims in the South China Sea are similar to those of China and Itu Aba Island was brought up in testimony during the court hearings.

The international tribunal yesterday concluded that all of the high-tide features in the Spratly Islands, including Itu Aba, are legally "rocks" that do not generate an exclusive economic zone or continental shelf.

"We hereby stress that the Republic of China [ROC] enjoys rights as afforded by international law and the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea over South China Sea islands and their relevant waters," Presidential Office spokesman Alex Huang (□□□) told a news conference following the issuance of the verdict yesterday afternoon.

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Huang said that as Taipei was not invited to participate in the arbitration process, nor consulted on its opinion, the government solemnly declares its refusal to recognize the tribunal's verdict and deems it as carrying no legal effect on the nation.

Reiterating the nation's sovereignty claims over South China Sea islands and their surrounding waters, Huang said the government pledges to steadfastly safeguard the nation's territory and sovereignty, and would prevent any infringement of its national interests.

"We call for a peaceful resolution of disputes in the South China Sea through multilateral negotiations," he added.

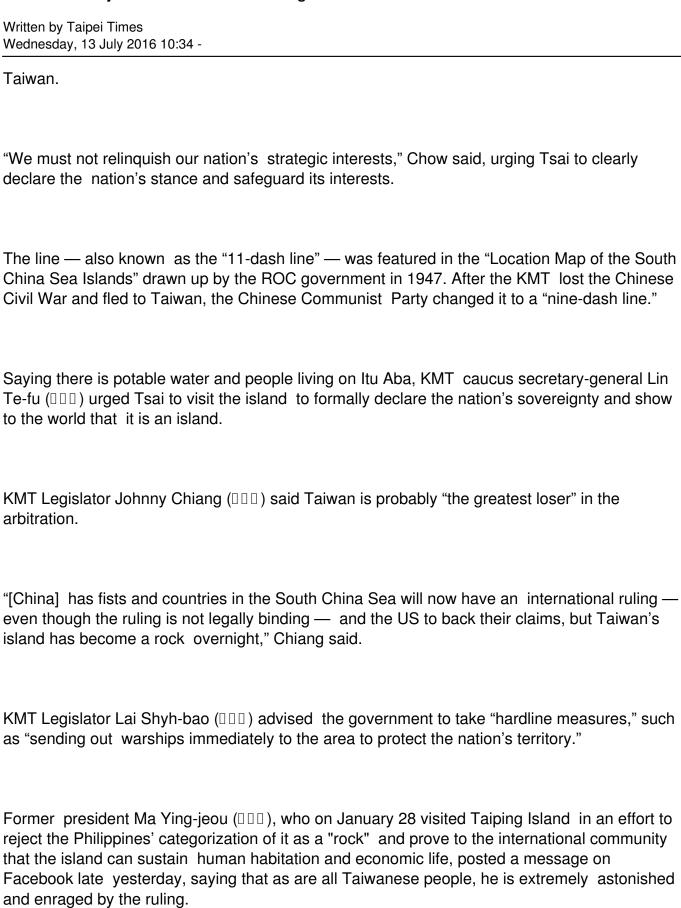
Shortly after the ruling was issued, President Tsai Ing-wen ([][]]) convened a high-level government meeting, Huang said, adding that the government has decided to move forward by one day a patrol mission to the South China Sea by a Kang Ding-class frigate originally scheduled for tomorrow.

Minister of Foreign Affairs David Lee (\$\Bigcup \Bigcup \Bigcu

Asked whether Tsai plans to board the frigate leaving for the South China Sea, Lee said: "I can say no more."

Reacting to the ruling, Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) Culture and Communications Committee director Chow Chi-wai (□□□) said that it was utterly unacceptable and unsatisfactory.

Chow added that the "U-shaped line" representing the nation's territory in the region covers a total sea area of 3.6 million square kilometers, which is more than 100 times the size of



The People First Party also issued a statement dismissing the ruling, saying the government

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must refuse to recognize any verdicts or announcements regarding South China Sea islands handed down by international courts based on "hypocritical reasons" or technicalities.

Meanwhile, the American Institute in Taiwan, reiterating its long-standing policy, said the US supports the peaceful resolution of disputes in the South China Sea, including the use of international legal mechanisms such as arbitration.

Additional reporting by Alison Hsiao

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