

Ministry decries Beijing bullying tactics

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This photo taken on Friday shows a woman walking past Marriott signage in Hangzhou in China's Zhejiang province.

Authorities in China have shut down Marriott's local website for a week after the US hotel giant listed Chinese-claimed regions such as Taiwan and Hong Kong as separate countries.

Photo: AFP

The Republic of China is an independent nation and its efforts to ameliorate relations with other members of the international community will not be affected by Chinese oppression, Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesman Andrew Lee (李安) said yesterday.

The statement was made in response to the China National Tourism Administration's request that accommodation companies review their Web sites and apps to change what Beijing deems the inaccurate labeling of Taiwan and other nations that China claims as its territory.

The move is an expansion on efforts by Beijing to police how foreign businesses refer to territories claimed by Beijing on their Web sites.

The ministry has asked its missions overseas to contact the companies and express Taiwan's stern position on the matter and denounce Beijing's arbitrary acts, Lee said.

The Chinese government on Thursday suspended Marriott International Inc's Chinese Web site for a week to punish the world's largest hotel chain for listing Taiwan, Tibet, Hong Kong and Macau as separate nations on a customer questionnaire.

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Activities that challenge China's "legal red lines" will not be permitted, Xinhua news agency quoted a China tourism administration official as saying.

The administration ordered immediate and thorough checks of Web sites and apps by accommodation companies to ensure that they comply with the law, it said.

The Civil Aviation Administration of China on Friday demanded that Delta Air Lines Inc apologize for listing Taiwan and Tibet as nations on its Web site, while another government agency took aim at Inditex-owned fashion brand Zara and medical device maker Medtronic PLC for similar issues.

Marriott, Delta, Zara and Medtronic have all apologized.

The Chinese aviation authority on Friday ordered all foreign airlines operating routes to China to check their Web sites and apps.

The crackdown was accompanied by an outcry from Chinese netizens, who assisted with efforts to unearth other infractions.

Shanghai-based newspaper The Paper yesterday reported that it found 24 other foreign airlines with Web sites listing Taiwan, Hong Kong or Macau as nations.

Most were in pull-down menus in registration or comments sections, it said.

"The essence of the problem is the 'political arrogance' of foreign companies unafraid to hurt the feelings of people from other countries," Chinese Communist Party mouthpiece the People's Daily said in an editorial.

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