

## Free speech facing three threats: foundation head

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Pressure from China, flawed legislation and self-censorship among Taiwanese youth are the biggest threats to the nation's freedom of speech, Nylon Cheng Liberty Foundation managing director Cheng Tsing-hua (鄭清華) said on Saturday.

April 7 was designated Free Speech Day in 2016 to commemorate democracy advocate Deng Nan-jung (鄧南仲), who set himself on fire 29 years ago to protest against government restrictions on the freedom of speech.

Free speech in Taiwan still faces many threats, one of them being pressure from China, said Cheng, who is Deng's younger brother.

China has been trying to restrict Taiwanese's freedom of speech using its growing political and economic influence, he said.

For example, the Taiwanese film Missing Johnny (失蹤的Johnny) was last month banned in China after the male lead, Lawrence Ko (柯俊雄), was reported to be a supporter of Taiwanese independence, he said.

To reduce China's influence, Taiwanese need to avoid being overly dependent on the Chinese market, he said.

Furthermore, certain legislation, such as the Assembly and Parade Act (集會遊行法), have apparently restricted people's right to freely express themselves, he said.

Other things that prevent Taiwanese from exercising their right to freedom of speech include government orders banning the public from displaying the national flag at certain occasions — such as the time when Chen Yunlin (陳雲林), a former chairman of China's Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Straits, visited Taiwan — he added.

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However, the biggest threat against free speech comes from the growing reluctance among Taiwanese youth to talk about politics for fear of being labeled “pro-Taiwanese independence,” he said.

Since the Sunflower movement four years ago, Taiwanese youth had become less interested in participating in public affairs, he said, adding that he finds fear-induced self-censorship more worrying than anything.

Source: [Taipei Time - 2018/04/09](#)