

Ties urged for Taiwanese, Japanese city councilors

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Taiwan Solidarity Union (TSU) chairman Lau Yi-te, second right, Tokyo-based Taiwan 2020 Campaign Council chairman Satoru Mizushima and others raise their fists at a news conference at which they announced the establishment of a Taiwan-Japan councilors association.

Photo: Cheng Hung-ta, Taipei Times

Two groups from Taiwan and Japan yesterday called for the formation of an association of Taiwanese and Japanese city councilors to push back against Chinese pressure.

The initiative was proposed by the Taiwan Solidarity Union (TSU) and Tokyo-based Taiwan 2020 Campaign Council at a news conference held by the TSU to bolster Taiwanese and Japanese efforts to petition for Taiwan's participation in the 2020 Tokyo Olympics under the name "Taiwan."

Council chairman Satoru Mizushima said he has been in contact with several Japanese Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) legislators, and has also proposed the formation of an association of Taiwanese and Japanese city councilors to Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, who is the president of Japan's ruling LDP.

Abe approved of the idea and the council plans to establish the association this fall, he said.

The council hopes to work alongside TSU chairman Lau Yi-te (劉宜德), Mizushima added.

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Abe likes Taiwan very much, Mizushima said, adding the he could be described as the Japanese prime minister who cares about Taiwan the most in the 73 years since the end of World War II.

The association would be a union connecting Taiwanese and Japanese city councilors, Lau said.

Faced with Chinese pressure, Taiwan and Japan should not content with having only strategic ties between governments, but should also take the friendly relations between Taiwanese and Japanese a step further, he said.

City councilors are like bridges connecting the two nations and their people, Lau said, adding that lawmakers should also be included.

China's "united front" strategy toward Taiwan is all-pervasive, therefore the pro-independence camp needs to catch up and work harder to establish friendly relations between Taiwan and Japan, he added.

The campaign in Tokyo for Taiwan's participation in the Tokyo Olympics under the name "Taiwan" has been well-received, Mizushima said.

The council launched the campaign because it wants to speak up against the unjust treatment that Taiwan has received, he added.

China has sent letters to dozens of international airlines, including Japan Airlines and All Nippon Airways, demanding that they change the way they refer Taiwan on their Web sites to conform to Beijing's "one China" principle.

The Japanese airlines had complied with the demand.

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However, council director-general Hideki Nagayama in a Facebook post called on the carriers to change the reference back, and they removed the remarks that described Taiwan as a part of China.

“I felt the good conscience of Japanese companies, and was relieved,” Nagayama said.

This allowed the carriers to first respond to Chinese pressure and then use protests from Japanese as a reason to change the references back, he added.

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