

Ex-Olympic committee member's motives questioned

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Olympic bronze medalist and National Policy Adviser to the President Chi Cheng, third left, speaks at a public hearing discussing Taiwan's bid to participate in international sports events under the name "Taiwan" in Taipei on March 14.

Photo: CNA

Former Sports Administration director-general Yang Chung-ho (楊仲豪) yesterday questioned the motives of former Chinese Taipei Olympic Committee (CTOC) member Yao Yuan-chao (姚元超), referring to a letter Yao sent to the International Olympic Committee (IOC) in April saying that a local alliance's push for a change to Taiwan's name in the Olympics was promoting Taiwanese independence.

A group of local civic organizations has formed an alliance campaigning to change the nation's name from "Chinese Taipei" to "Taiwan" at the 2020 Tokyo Olympics.

National Policy Adviser to the President Chi Cheng (陳其), Yang and other advocates in February submitted a referendum bid on the matter to the Central Election Commission after a petition drive passed the first-stage threshold.

The campaign is now hoping to reach the second-stage threshold of 280,000 signatures by the end of next month and to put the issue to a vote at the end of the year.

"The gathering of signatures is not yet complete and we have not even voted in a referendum," said Chi, who is also an Olympic track and field medalist. "Why did [Yao] tell on [us]?"

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Yao reportedly wrote that Chi's behavior would trigger a crisis in the Taiwan Strait and suggested that the IOC send a warning to Taiwanese authorities through the CTOC to prevent a crisis.

The IOC in May sent a letter to the CTOC saying that it would not approve a change to the name "Chinese Taipei," under which Taiwan commonly competes internationally.

Yao said he wrote the letter himself and no one directed him, adding that if he had not said something, serious problems would arise.

In response, Chi said it was embarrassing that Japanese are helping Taiwan, but some Taiwanese are sabotaging the efforts.

A group of Japanese last year formed the Taiwan 2020 Campaign Council in Tokyo to petition for the nation's participation in the Tokyo Olympics under the name "Taiwan."

As someone who has worked in the CTOC, Yao should know that athletes want to compete under the name Taiwan, Chi said.

Yao's motive is strange, she added.

Furthermore, the IOC cooperated and convened a meeting of its Executive Board, and China and pro-China groups used the IOC's letter to make threats and obstruct the referendum, he said.

If the referendum passes, the government must begin pushing and lobbying for the Olympic name change according to IOC-approved processes, Yang said.

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In the past, even when the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) government wanted to participate in the Olympics under the name "Republic of China," athletes' ability to compete was unaffected, Yang said, adding that the current campaign would not affect their right to compete either.

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