

As a result of indifference from members of the hypocritical international community that do not have the guts to stand up to China's despotism, Taiwan was again subjected to absurd treatment at an international event.

The ridiculousness was highlighted last week when Chinese Taipei Football Association secretary-general Chen Wei-jen (陳偉建) said that the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) had fined Taiwan's national soccer body US\$5,000 after spectators displayed a flag promoting Taiwanese independence at a game in Kaohsiung on June 2.

According to Chen, the AFC said the display was "a breach of regulations against the exhibition of political flags and slogans at international matches."

Unbelievable.

It is sad enough that Taiwanese athletes, unlike their counterparts from other nations, cannot compete with pride and honor for Taiwan, but must participate under the meaningless name "Chinese Taipei." It is even more frustrating for the national soccer body to be fined by the AFC over a fan's actions, a move that oppresses freedom of expression.

The AFC said the display of the flag was "an exhibition of political flags and slogans," yet the name Taiwan's teams compete under is itself political, a demeaning and geographically incorrect title that is a result of China's bullying and sneaky attempts to shape a global impression that downgrades Taiwan's sovereignty through the use of such a title.

If the AFC does not regard "Chinese Taipei" as political language, on what basis does it decide that a fan's self-expression is an attempt to mix sports with politics?

Granted, it might be a necessary concession to refer to Taiwan as "Chinese Taipei" in international sport, in line with the protocol that the government signed with the International Olympic Committee. However, it does not mean that spectators must quietly accept this

continuing injustice against Taiwan.

It was equally disappointing to hear Premier Lin Chuan (林昌) say last week: “Chinese Taipei is the Republic of China.”

Lin should be reminded that just because the official delegation from Taiwan has to march under the absurd “Chinese Taipei” banner, it does not mean that the 23 million people in Taiwan want to be called “Chinese Taipei-ers.”

A poll released by the Taiwanese Public Opinion Foundation late last month suggested that the percentage of people who regard themselves as “Taiwanese” has reached a record high of more than 80 percent, compared with 8.1 percent of respondents who consider themselves “Chinese” and 7.6 percent who identify as being both.

Most media outlets from other nations are willing to refer to Taiwan as Taiwan.

Self-respect gains respect. Taiwanese officials must not let themselves grow numb to such incorrectness and accept such injustice.

If Taiwanese do not demand a correction to the misunderstanding regarding their nationality, how can they expect members of the international community, global organizations and others to realize when they commit a mistake?

The government and the public alike must not remain silent when Taiwan’s sovereign status is questioned or its national image is undermined through inadequate references, otherwise Taiwan will never escape the shackles of being regarded as a province of China. If Taiwanese do not stand up for themselves, it will be only matter of time before the name Taiwan is permanently removed from world maps and replaced with the ridiculous “Chinese Taipei” appellation.

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