

Moving capital is people's choice

Written by Taipei Times Editorial
Sunday, 10 January 2021 07:24

Lawmakers on Monday said that plans to move the legislature to Taichung were still being considered, but experts have raised concerns about the logistics.

Such a move has been discussed since at least 2004. In 2012, Minister of Transportation and Communications Lin Chia-lung (林錫山) — who was a Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) legislator at the time — called for Taichung to be made the nation's second capital.

Lin said that moving the Legislative Yuan would better balance national development and allow the land occupied by the legislature in Taipei to return to being a school, its original purpose.

Relocating a nation's capital is not a new idea. Many countries do so to shed their colonial past, or to put administrative power closer to the public served.

Operating two capitals can introduce cost and security concerns, and the move would bring major logistical challenges.

Some lawmakers must be at the Legislative Yuan twice per week, and although Lin said that this would not be a problem with the High Speed Rail, the cost — which taxpayers would bear — would add up.

Lin also said that for government agencies, Taichung would be safer than Taipei, which is vulnerable to nuclear disasters, citing the 2011 Fukushima Dai-ichi nuclear power plant disaster in Japan.

Tokyo moved some government functions to Osaka following the incident, Lin said.

DPP Legislator Chen Ou-po (陳歐陽) agreed that the legislature might be safer outside Taipei, but gave a different reason, saying that the military could better protect the government if it were on

Moving capital is people's choice

Written by Taipei Times Editorial
Sunday, 10 January 2021 07:24

the east coast, in Yilan County. Yilan would be safer than Taichung, which is directly across the Taiwan Strait from China and therefore more vulnerable to attack.

However, improvements in Chinese missile technology and China's growing military presence in the South China Sea diminish the advantage of locating government facilities on the east coast.

Another consideration raised on Monday by professors Chen Ming-siang (陳明祥) of Tamkang University and Peng Chin-peng (彭欽朋) of National Taiwan University was that government officials from different agencies must regularly meet, so moving the Legislative Yuan would necessitate moving the Executive Yuan and possibly other government agencies.

Vice President William Lai (賴清德) in February 2018, when he was premier, said that he supported moving the legislative and executive branches to Taichung, while deputy legislative speaker Tsai Chi-chang (蔡啟芳) said that it would solve issues of limited space and traffic congestion in Taipei.

Perhaps it mainly comes down to what a capital city means to Taiwanese. An article published by the BBC on Dec. 6, 2017, said that capital cities must be protected, must exert control and project unity, and must be seen as representative and accessible.

The legislative and executive branches are built on repurposed properties in a congested urban area, established when no consideration was given to space for protests or to the accessibility of institutions to the general public. They are in an area that is vulnerable to earthquakes, nuclear disasters and potentially volcanic eruptions.

However, if they were moved to Taichung, Taipei would likely no longer be seen as a center of control and unity.

It is not clear whether the relocation of the seat of power would help or hinder the development of a national consciousness in Taiwan, but given the uncertainty, the government should put it to a referendum and let Taiwanese choose.

Moving capital is people's choice

Written by Taipei Times Editorial
Sunday, 10 January 2021 07:24

Source: [Taipei Times - Editorials 2021/01/10](#)