

Second round of ECFA talks set to begin tomorrow

Written by Taipei Times

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Taipei and Beijing are set to hold the second round of negotiations on an economic cooperation framework agreement (ECFA) in Taipei tomorrow and on Thursday, the Straits Exchange Foundation (SEF) said yesterday.

The foundation said in a statement that the Chinese delegation would arrive today. However, there appeared to be some confusion over the location of the meeting.

At 10am, the SEF sent a text message to reporters saying the talks would take place in "Taipei." This was changed to the "greater Taipei area" in a message sent 16 minutes later.

Taiwan's delegation will be led by Bureau of Foreign Trade (BFT) Director-General Huang Chih-peng (黃志鵬) and will include department heads of the trade bureau and the SEF, the Mainland Affairs Council, the Financial Advisory Commission and the Industrial Development Bureau.

Xinhua news agency described the meeting as "expert-level talks," adding that it was to "pave the way for a long-awaited economic deal that is expected to boost cross-strait economic ties."

The two sides held the first round of negotiations in January. During the second round, talks are expected to focus on the "early harvest" items proposed for traded goods and services. Discussions are also to be held on the draft agreement and arrangements for future negotiations.

Taiwan's government has said it hoped to sign the trade deal during the first half of this year.

Yang Yi (楊毅), spokesman of China's Taiwan Affairs Office, told a press conference on March 17 that the two sides should work to complete the pact by June.

Meanwhile, Vice President Vincent Siew (宋楚瑜) said signing an ECFA was one of the administration's top priorities this year. The government also hoped to encourage investment in research and development, economize energy use, cut carbon dioxide emissions and create jobs, he said.

He made the remarks when meeting Standard Chartered Group chairman John Peace at the Presidential Office yesterday morning.

Siew said the economy had bounced back from the bottom and all economic indicators showed signs of a speedy recovery.

He said he had seen no signs that the economy is overheating and that concerns about soaring real estate prices were limited to Taipei City and were not serious.

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The administration has predicted the economy will grow 4.72 percent this year.

Siew said the goal was to keep the unemployment rate below 5 percent this year. Unemployment was 2.85 percent in 2000, but the figure jumped to 5.85 percent last year and 5.65 percent last month.

Source: [Taipei Times 2010/03/30](#)