

## Ma hails 'Taiwan Province'-Texas ties

Written by Taipei Times

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President Ma Ying-jeou (馬英九) referred to Taiwan as a “province” yesterday while describing the sister-state relationship between Taiwan and Texas, rekindling the controversial issue of his perception of Taiwan’s status.

Ma told Texas Governor Rick Perry during a meeting at the Presidential Office that the country’s relationship with Texas was a close one.

“In 1988, Texas and Taiwan Province became sister states,” Ma said. “Over the past two years, we have engaged in many exchanges in technology, culture, education and agriculture.”

Ma thanked the Texas legislature for passing a resolution last year reaffirming the “sister state and sister province” relationship.

However, Ma’s description ran counter to the one stated in Resolution 81(R) HR 1593 passed by the Texas House of Representatives in June last year, which states: “Texas and Taiwan are celebrating the 21st anniversary of their Sister State relationship in June 2009.”

“Texas and Taiwan became Sister States on June 13, 1988, and today 11 jurisdictions within Texas enjoy similar ties with their Taiwanese counterparts ... the House of Representatives of the 81st Texas Legislature hereby commemorate the 21st anniversary of the signing of the Sister State agreement between Texas and Taiwan and extend sincere best wishes to all those who are engaged in strengthening Texas-Taiwan Sister relations; and, be it further resolved that an official copy of this resolution be prepared for the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in Houston as an expression of high regard by the Texas House of Representatives” it said.

The Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in Houston, however, refers to Taiwan as a “province” on its official Web site.

Titled “Regional Relationships,” the site says the “State of Texas established a sister-state relationship with Taiwan Province in 1988, and at present, ten Texas cities/county have sisterhood relationships with cities in Taiwan.”

Liu Shih-chung (劉士雄), a research fellow at the Taiwan Brain Trust think tank, said Ma’s logic made sense under the Republic of China (ROC) Constitution, which views China as part of its territory.

“But it is impractical and runs counter to political reality,” he said.

In the eyes of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), Liu said the ROC was long subjugated when the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) lost the Chinese civil war in 1949. For the DPP, Taiwan is an independent sovereignty whose current name is the ROC, he said.

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Liu said he did not have any problem with the sister-state relationship between Taiwan and Texas in terms of trade. What worried him, however, was Ma's backtracking to the former KMT administration's "unrealistic" mindset that China is part of the ROC and the relationship between Taiwan and China is one of region to region.

Taiwan has relationships with 42 US states, the Arkansas-based Taiwan-United States Sister Relations Alliance says.

DPP spokesman Tsai Chi-chung (蔡奇中) said Taiwan is a sovereign county, not a province.

Ma was "belittling the country to such an extent that he is not qualified to be the country's head," Tsai said, adding that the president failed to protect the country's dignity and was instead humiliating Taiwan before foreigners.

Ma sees Taiwan as part of China and all his policies stem from that position, Tsai said, adding that Taiwanese could not bear such remarks.

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