

Taiwan promises to fight name change in medical group

Written by Taipei Times

Wednesday, 09 February 2011 08:25 -

Taiwan vowed yesterday to take whatever action necessary to defend its official title in an Asian medical student group.

Lin Wen-tong (林文雄), director of the Ministry of Education's Bureau of International Cultural and Educational Relations, said that Taiwan would not oppose the Asian Medical Students Association (AMSA) accepting China as a member, but said that a proposal by Beijing to change Taiwan's title from "AMSA-Taiwan" to "AMSA-Taiwan, China" was totally unacceptable.

The name-change proposal is to be voted on in a Feb. 27 AMSA members' meeting.

AMSA, a non-governmental organization founded by Taiwan, Thailand, Japan, South Korea, Australia, Hong Kong, the Philippines, Malaysia and Indonesia in 1985, now has 20 members.

AMSA-Taiwan said it launched a campaign last week to solicit the support of other AMSA members to safeguard Taiwan's name.

"AMSA-Taiwan is excited about the potential of our Chinese medical student friends to join AMSA, and to play a more active role in this international medical students' platform, as we believe friendship and medicine should be beyond borders," a statement in English released by AMSA-Taiwan read. "However, we are regretful to learn that AMSA-China has brought political interference into AMSA, a non-political students' organization. We consider such unnecessary political interference to be detrimental to the progress and development of AMSA."

As of press time yesterday, the on-line signature drive has garnered more than 1,100 signatures from students in Indonesia, Malaysia, Taiwan and the US.

AMSA-Taiwan chairperson Chen Ying-chi (陳英琪), a student at Chung Shan Medical University's School of Medicine, slammed China's proposal as unreasonable.

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“It’s an undeniable fact that Taiwan is a founding member of AMSA. To change AMSA-Taiwan’s name undoubtedly runs counter to the AMSA’s history,” she said.

Democratic Progressive Party Legislator Huang Wei-cher (黃偉哲) said “the incident again proves that President Ma Ying-jeou’s (馬英九) modus vivendi diplomatic truce with China is naive.”

ADDITIONAL REPORTING BY STAFF WRITER

Source: [Taipei Times - 2011/02/09](#)