

Taiwan making effort to attend WHA this year

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The government is making every effort to obtain an invitation to the annual World Health Assembly (WHA) session next month, despite the challenges it is facing, a Ministry of Foreign Affairs official said yesterday.

The WHA, the decisionmaking body of the WHO, is scheduled to hold its annual meeting in Geneva from May 22 to May 31.

The WHO secretariat has not decided whether to issue a WHA invitation to Taiwan, but the ministry will continue its efforts to express its intention to attend, Department of International Organizations Deputy Director-General Wang Liang-yu (王良瑜) told a regular news briefing.

Although there are some challenges, the ministry will do its utmost to seek an invitation, she said.

The deadline for the online registration for this year's session is May 8 and Taiwan hopes to receive an invitation by then, Wang said.

She added that the government has response measures in place, whether or not it receives an invitation.

Minister of Health and Welfare Chen Shih-chung (陳其南) said that he would lead a delegation to Geneva to express Taiwan's stance and promote the nation's contributions to international health, even if Taiwan is not invited to the meeting.

Minister of Foreign Affairs David Lee (李顯赫) said that Taiwan would continue to push its bid to attend the WHA, although prospects do not look promising.

Many of the nation's diplomatic allies have been helping Taiwan, he added.

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Over the past eight years, Taiwan has been invited to attend the WHA as an observer.

When the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) replaced the Beijing-friendly Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) government in May last year, Taiwan received a late invitation to attend the WHA that year.

However, the invitation contained an unexpected reference to UN Resolution No. 2758, passed on Oct. 25, 1971, which recognizes the People's Republic of China as "the only legitimate representative of China to the United Nations."

Amid strained cross-strait ties, there have been concerns that Beijing might try to block the WHO's invitation to Taiwan this year.

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