

## Cabinet urges Beijing to allow evacuation of Wuhan

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Premier Su Tseng-chang talks to reporters at the Central Epidemic Control Center in Taipei yesterday.

**Photo: CNA**

The Executive Yuan yesterday urged Beijing to accept the nation's request to evacuate about 300 Taiwanese stranded in Wuhan, China, after the city was locked down because of a coronavirus outbreak.

Executive Yuan spokeswoman Kolas Yotaka said that the Mainland Affairs Council and the Straits Exchange Foundation have so far received more than 200 telephone calls from Taiwanese barred from leaving Wuhan, requesting the government's assistance in returning home.

The council has informed Beijing that it wants to charter a flight to evacuate Taiwanese in Wuhan, Kolas said, adding that the council was making the request out of humanitarian considerations.

So far, China has yet to agree to this arrangement, she added.

"We urge Beijing to refrain from making a decision on this matter based on political considerations," she said.

The Taiwanese stranded in Wuhan are not businesspeople living in the city, but had traveled there for business trips or short tours, she said, adding that they are not being "properly looked

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after” as China’s Taiwan Affairs Office has claimed.

“We hope that Beijing will seriously consider our request to bring our compatriots back using a charter flight, considering that some of them have chronic diseases,” she said.

Taiwan Affairs Office spokesman Ma Xiaoguang (馬 Xiaoguang) said in a statement on Tuesday that, as of Monday it had not received any reports from its branch in Hubei Province — of which Wuhan is the capital — of any Taiwanese having contracted the virus.

He said that its staff members in Hubei have cared for the needs of Taiwanese in Wuhan and have instantly resolved their problems in accordance with its policy to contain the viral outbreak.

Ma said that China’s Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Straits had received a request to evacuate Taiwanese from the Straits Exchange Foundation at 6pm on Monday, but denied that the two sides were negotiating any kind of arrangement.

“We have been deeply concerned about the welfare and health of our Taiwanese compatriots since we began our work of curbing the spread of the viral pneumonia and have been in close contact with relevant authorities in Taiwan,” he said.

“We will arrange for Taiwanese experts to arrive in Wuhan to observe the situation and offer instant updates on the situation,” Ma added.

However, Premier Su Tseng-chang (蘇 Tseng-chang) said that the foundation has been trying to contact its counterpart in China as the government is very concerned about the well-being of Taiwanese in Wuhan.

“[From the statement] we can see that China does not contact us directly, but has said publicly that it would look into the situation and care for [Taiwanese]. We will keep trying to

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communicate” with China, Su said.

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