

## Time to push penalties for PRC residency cards: call

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The Legislative Yuan has yet to take action on the Mainland Affairs Council's proposed amendments to penalize Taiwanese who use the Chinese residency permit introduced by Beijing in 2018, Taiwan Democracy Watch said yesterday.

The residency card introduced in September 2018 allows Taiwanese, Hong Kongers and Macanese who have lived in China for more than six months and are legally working, living or studying in China certain rights and benefits enjoyed by Chinese citizens, such as state-funded education, social insurance and housing subsidies.

Taiwanese officials at the time said the cards were designed to evade provisions in the Act Governing Relations Between the People of the Taiwan Area and the Mainland Area (兩岸人民關係條例) that ban Taiwanese holding household registrations simultaneously in Taiwan and China.

The council that same month proposed amendments to the act that would require holders of the Chinese residency cards to report to authorities, and then-premier William Lai (賴清德), who is now vice president-elect, said the amendments would be reviewed at the next legislative session.

However, the proposed amendments have stalled since last spring, Taiwan Democracy Watch director Chiou Wen-tsong (邱文宗) said.

Although legislators continued to push for such amendments after Lai resigned on Jan. 14 last year, and the council sent additional suggestions to the legislature in April, there has been no follow-up since then, Chiou said.

Now would be an ideal time to push through the proposals, given the atmosphere caused by the COVID-19 outbreak in China, he said.

A report submitted to the legislature by National Security Bureau Director-General Chiu

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Kuo-cheng (郭景聲) in November last year estimated that about 100,000 Taiwanese hold the Chinese residency cards, and Chiu said the bureau was concerned about the potential impact of the card system on Taiwan's elections and would closely monitor the situation.

As the cards can be used in place of a passport at China's border crossings, Taiwanese authorities cannot determine the exact number of Taiwanese entering or leaving China, leaving them dependent upon information provided by airlines, a China researcher said on condition of anonymity.

This is one reason that they could not determine the exact number of Taiwanese trapped in Wuhan by the COVID-19 outbreak, and could only get rough estimates from a Taiwanese businesspeople's association, the researcher said.

The government should require Taiwanese holders of Chinese residency cards to declare the cards when they arrive in Taiwan from China, Chiou said.

As the Chinese government requires card applicants to be resident in China for at least 183 days prior to applying for a card, Taiwan needs to consider whether these cardholders should be allowed to enjoy healthcare and other social benefits in Taiwan, he said.

Given that Beijing is using the cards to "naturalize" Taiwanese, the government should respond by recognizing these cardholders as having dual citizenship, he added.

However, Cross-Strait Policy Association secretary-general Chang Pai-ta (張派達) said that while anti-China sentiment is high right now, the government should be cautious about changing cross-strait policy.

The passage of amendments aimed at China residency card holders would have a wider impact than the passage of the Anti-infiltration Act (反渗透法) on Dec. 31 last year did, and would affect Taiwanese working, studying or doing business in China, Chang said.

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