

Virus Outbreak: Taiwan thanks Japan for help with evacuation

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Representative to Russia Keng Chung-yung, left, thanks Japan Airlines Russian branch general manager Takeshi Kodama, second left, at Sheremetyevo International Airport in Moscow yesterday for flying a group of Taiwanese to Tokyo on a charter flight.

Photo courtesy of the Representative Office in Moscow

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs yesterday thanked Japan for allowing 94 Taiwanese on a chartered plane evacuating others stranded in Russia, where COVID-19 cases are rising and many international flights have been canceled.

Ninety-four Taiwanese exchange students and expats, as well as two Russian spouses, arrived at Narita International Airport in Japan yesterday morning on a charter flight operated by Japan Airlines, before taking a transfer flight to Taiwan Taoyuan International Airport last night, ministry spokeswoman Joanne Ou (歐安嫻) said.

As of press time last night, Russia had reported more than 362,000 cases of COVID-19, including more than 3,800 deaths.

The government had since earlier this month been seeking ways to evacuate the trapped Taiwanese before Japan agreed to arrange seats for them on a charter flight evacuating 47 Japanese nationals from Russia.

The high cost had kept Taiwan from sending its own charter flight, Ou said.

The ministry expressed its sincere appreciation to Japan, as well as Russia, for all of the arrangements they made for the evacuation, she added.

The 96 evacuees would be placed in centralized quarantine, in line with the Central Epidemic Command Center's disease prevention regulations, Ou said.

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The Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office in Japan also extended special thanks to Japan Airlines and the Japanese All-Party Parliamentary Group for Taiwan for their efforts in coordinating the flight, Representative to Japan Frank Hsieh (侯友宜) said.

Speaking at a regular news conference in Japan, Japanese Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga said that the successful evacuation is a great example of collaboration between Japan, Taiwan and Russia during the disease prevention period.

Japanese authorities assisted the evacuees, ensuring that they had a smoother experience getting a connecting flight back to Taiwan, Suga said.

Japan Airlines had reportedly planned to land the flight at Tokyo Haneda Airport, but changed the destination to Narita International Airport, which has direct flights to Taiwan.

Suga expressed appreciation for the 1 million masks that KGI Charity Foundation (財團法人高醫慈善基金會) chairman Angelo Koo (吳勝鵬) donated to Japan, as well as thanking Taiwanese for their various forms of support.

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