

Cabinet to prepare HK action plan: Tsai

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President Tsai Ing-wen talks to reporters before a meeting of the Democratic Progressive Party Central Executive Committee in Taipei yesterday.

Photo: Tu Chien-jung, Taipei Times

The Executive Yuan is to prepare an action plan to provide humanitarian assistance to Hong Kongers, President Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文) said yesterday, as Beijing seeks to push through a national security law for Hong Kong.

People have been paying close attention to the developments in Hong Kong over the past few days, Tsai told reporters before attending a Democratic Progressive Party meeting in Taipei.

Taiwan, like all other democratic nations, hopes the “status quo” in Hong Kong — its self-governance, freedom and human rights protection — does not erode further, she said.

Taiwan urges the Chinese government not to renege on its promise of not changing Hong Kong’s status for 50 years and of letting Hong Kongers administer the territory, and calls on it to allow Hong Kong society to return to peace and dialogue, Tsai said.

If the situation worsens, and the territory’s self-governance, human rights or freedom are subject to further suppression, Taiwan would continue to support Hong Kongers’ fight for democracy and freedom, which it believes are crucial to regional peace and stability, she said.

Tsai said that she spoke with Premier Su Tseng-chang (蘇貞昌) and they agreed to have the Executive Yuan draw up an action plan.

The Mainland Affairs Council would prepare the plan, whose execution would involve coordination between government agencies, Tsai said.

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The government would organize its resources and prepare a comprehensive plan, including a budget and a clear mechanism for taking in and taking care of Hong Kongers, she said.

The president said that she hopes the council would propose a plan and explain it to the public soon.

In response to Next Media Group (新傳媒) founder Jimmy Lai's (賴國輝) suggestion that immigration laws be relaxed to allow Hong Kongers to move to Taiwan, Tsai said that the laws are already relatively loose for Hong Kongers.

Over the past year, the number of Hong Kongers who have moved to Taiwan has increased 41 percent annually to more than 5,000, Tsai said, adding that she expects that trend to continue.

Asked whether a refugee law would be drafted, Tsai said current laws — particularly the Act Governing Relations with Hong Kong and Macau (香港關係條例) — are sufficient.

Regardless of whether the act is amended, one thing is certain: Taiwan's determination to take care of Hong Kongers, she said.

Taiwan would provide assistance to allow Hong Kongers to live and work in Taiwan, she added.

Tsai had previously said that the government could consider invoking Article 60 of the act to suspend parts of it if the situation in Hong Kong deteriorates.

Asked which parts she was referring to, Tsai said any adjustments would depend on the situation.

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Asked about Minister of Foreign Affairs Joseph Wu's (吳國修) remark that China's next step could be to use force against Taiwan, Tsai said the current circumstances require close attention.

Government agencies have been asked to follow the developments and provide predictions, she said.

The Chinese Nationalist Party's (KMT) accusation that she was cutting off Hong Kongers was an "incorrect interpretation," Tsai said.

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