

Tsai meets Azar at Presidential Office

Written by Taipei Times

Tuesday, 11 August 2020 05:17 -



>President Tsai Ing-wen, right, talks with US Secretary of Health and Human Services Alex Azar, left, yesterday at the Presidential Office in Taipei.

Photo: EPA-EFE / Presidential Office handout

President Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文) yesterday met with US Secretary of Health and Human Services Alex Azar in the highest-level official meeting between the two nations since 1979.

“It is a true honor to be here to convey a message of strong support and friendship from [US] President [Donald] Trump to Taiwan,” Azar said during the open portion of his courtesy call to the Presidential Office, which was streamed live online before Tsai and Azar held a closed-door meeting.

“Taiwan’s response to COVID-19 has been among the most successful in the world, and that is a tribute to the open, transparent, democratic nature of Taiwan’s society and culture,” Azar said.

The US has expressed its admiration for Taiwan’s democratic success in tangible ways, such as signing legislation to strengthen the bilateral partnership and opening a new American Institute in Taiwan (AIT) complex in Taipei in 2018, Azar said.

The focus of his trip was to highlight Taiwan’s success in combating the COVID-19 pandemic and to build cooperation to prevent, detect and respond to health threats, he said.

Tsai said that she hoped the US delegation’s visits to various government agencies and institutions would give them a substantive view of Taiwan’s efforts to contain the COVID-19 outbreak.

“The visit also provides us an opportunity to speak face-to-face on issues of importance to both

Tsai meets Azar at Presidential Office

Written by Taipei Times

Tuesday, 11 August 2020 05:17 -

sides and find a direction to future cooperation,” Tsai said.

She thanked the US for recognizing Taiwan’s contribution to the global coronavirus response and for supporting its efforts to expand its international participation.

She also raised the issue of Taiwan’s exclusion from the World Health Assembly (WHA), which has been largely due to China’s objections.

“The decision to bar Taiwan from participation in the WHA is a violation of the universal right to health,” she said.

Azar, who arrived on Sunday, is on a four-day visit, the first by a US Cabinet member in six years, and he is the most senior US official to visit since Washington and Taipei severed formal diplomatic ties in 1979.

At a press briefing prior to his meeting with Tsai, Azar told reporters that “this visit is about Taiwan,” in response to questions about US-Taiwan-China relations and Beijing’s anger over his visit.

“This visit represents an acknowledgement of the United States and Taiwan’s deep friendship and partnership across security, economics, healthcare, and democratic open transparent values,” he said.

“This visit is about reaffirming our connections with Taiwan and the important role Taiwan plays in public health,” he added.

In his opening statement at the briefing, Azar said that his visit was “consistent with the [US] long-standing ‘one China’ policy and past engagement with Taiwan.”

Tsai meets Azar at Presidential Office

Written by Taipei Times

Tuesday, 11 August 2020 05:17 -

In related news, Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) Chairman Johnny Chiang (蔣經國) said that the Tsai administration should be careful in its handling of external affairs, particularly in light of the deteriorating US-China relations.

In other developments, Air Force Headquarters said two Chinese warplanes briefly crossed the median line of the Taiwan Strait yesterday morning.

A Shenyang J-11 and a Chengdu J-10 briefly crossed the line into Taiwan's side at about 9am, but retreated after Taiwanese patrol planes issued radio warnings, it said.

There was no cause for public alarm, and the military is continuing to closely monitor the airspace and waters around Taiwan, the headquarters added.

Yesterday's incursion was the third time that Chinese People's Liberation Army aircraft crossed the median line since March last year, Ministry of National Defense data showed.

Yesterday's action was a protest by Beijing against the improvement of US-Taiwan relations, as demonstrated by Azar's visit, Democratic Progressive Party Legislator Wang Ting-yu (王廷瑜) said.

The move was also intended to appease Chinese Communist Party (CCP) "warmongers" and was a sign of "tremendous stupidity on the part of the CCP. There is absolutely no good in it for them," Wang said.

Additional reporting by Aaron Tu

Source: [Taipei Times - 2020/08/11](#)