

## Passport redesign highlights 'Taiwan'

Written by Taipei Times

Thursday, 03 September 2020 03:34 -

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From left, Cabinet spokesman Ting Yi-ming, Minister of Foreign Affairs Joseph Wu and Bureau of Consular Affairs Director-General Phoebe Yeh speak in front of a display of a new passport design at the Executive Yuan in Taipei yesterday.

**Photo: CNA**

The Executive Yuan yesterday unveiled a redesigned cover for the Republic of China (ROC) passport, which highlights the English word "Taiwan," prompting criticism from the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT), which said that reducing the size of the ROC text would not help enhance the nation's international status.

The new design would become available in January next year, officials said.

The design entails minimal changes, highlights "Taiwan" and changes the way in which the nation's official title is displayed, Minister of Foreign Affairs Joseph Wu (吳敦義) told a news conference in Taipei.

The ROC title, prominently displayed on the current passport, is in a much smaller font and encircles the national emblem in the new design, a sample released by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs showed.

The word "Taiwan" is placed directly above the word "passport," making it obvious at first glance that it is a Taiwanese passport, a change from the words being separated by the Chinese characters for "passport," Wu said.

The national emblem was retained, as more than 90 percent of passports bear their national emblem, with fewer than 20 nations not doing so, he said.

Since COVID-19 was first reported in China late last year, many Taiwanese have expressed

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concern that their passports might mislead foreigners into thinking that they are Chinese, Wu said.

With controls on inbound travelers stepped up at airports all over the world, the call for the passport cover to be revised to prevent Taiwanese from being subjected to “unnecessary treatment” has intensified, he said.

The redesign was proposed in accordance with a motion passed by lawmakers in July, which mandated that the passport be redesigned to enable Taiwanese to distinguish themselves from Chinese, Wu said.

An intergovernmental panel deliberated the design and it was approved by the Executive Yuan last week, he said.

The ministry would do its best to make the passports available in January next year and would notify all countries of the redesign two months prior to their release, Wu said.

People who want a new passport should follow the same procedure for renewing a passport at the Bureau of Consular Affairs, he said, adding that it would cost NT\$1,300 — the same as a normal replacement.

Current passports would remain valid until their expiry date, Wu said.

All the costs for production of the new passports would be covered by existing ministry funds, he said.

The bureau plans to produce 1.5 million new passports next year, down from 1.7 million in previous years, but the estimate might drop depending on the global COVID-19 situation, Bureau of Consular Affairs Director-General Phoebe Yeh (葉子瑜) said.

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Meanwhile, the KMT said that the new design would not help improve travel for most Taiwanese or help the nation's international status.

The design should take into account Taiwan's special "national conditions" and highlight its official English name, the party said in a statement.

The highlighting of "Taiwan" did not require the official English-language name, the ROC, to be minimized, the party said.

The current passport already has "Taiwan" and it is a completely different color from the Chinese passport, the KMT said, adding that there is little chance of other countries confusing the two.

The New Power Party (NPP) said that the national emblem should be changed, as it is similar to the KMT's emblem.

"We find it unacceptable that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs kept the national emblem, which closely resembles the KMT's emblem. As such, we plan to propose an amendment to the National Emblem and National Flag of the Republic of China Act (國旗國徽法) in the upcoming legislative session, which would replace the current national emblem with one with imagery of Taiwan," the NPP said.

Additional reporting by Sherry Hsiao and Shelley Shan

Source: [Taipei Times - 2020/09/03](#)