

Saint Vincent PM visits Taiwan to ‘show solidarity’

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Saint Vincent and the Grenadines Prime Minister Ralph Gonsalves, left, greets the press at Taiwan Taoyuan International Airport yesterday as Minister of Foreign Affairs Joseph Wu, right, looks on.

Photo: Yao Chieh-hsiu, Taipei Times

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines Prime Minister Ralph Gonsalves yesterday called on China to halt its military exercises around Taiwan, saying that he aimed to show solidarity with Taipei by visiting for six days.

Speaking at Taiwan Taoyuan International Airport upon his arrival yesterday morning, Gonsalves said he understands there are differences between the Republic of China (ROC), the official name of Taiwan, and the People's Republic of China (PRC), following the Chinese Civil War in 1949.

He referred to the ROC and PRC as “different legitimate political expressions of Chinese civilization,” and said he expects their differences to be resolved peacefully over time.

Gonsalves said that, as a member of the UN, his country has normal interactions with the PRC in the international arena.

However, he said he finds the “threats of violence and threats of aggression” made by the PRC unacceptable.

Given that people live in an interrelated world, the PRC's behavior has “destabilized East Asia and the world,” Gonsalves said.

“I am here to show solidarity with people of the ROC Taiwan, and that does not prevent us from being respectful in our communications with PRC,” he said.

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His arrival coincides with intensive military drills conducted by China in waters around Taiwan proper in retaliation for a visit by US House of Representatives Speaker Nancy Pelosi last week.

On Thursday, the day after Pelosi left, the Chinese People's Liberation Army launched live-fire drills in six maritime areas near Taiwan.

The Japanese Ministry of Defense later the same day reported that five missiles had landed in Japan's exclusive economic zone, four of which had likely been fired over Taiwan.

Gonsalves yesterday said he would not comment on whether it was appropriate for Pelosi to visit Taiwan, but he believes that her Taiwan trip should not be used as grounds for Beijing's military exercises.

His visit has nothing to do with Pelosi or the US, and is not an act of provocation toward anyone, but an act of friendship toward Taiwan, Gonsalves said.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines is one of 14 UN members that recognize Taiwan instead of the PRC.

This trip marks Gonsalves' 11th visit to Taiwan as prime minister, and the first since he was re-elected for a fifth consecutive term in November 2020, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said.

Gonsalves, who is to be welcomed with a military ceremony, is also to attend a state banquet with President Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文), the ministry said.

In related news, Lithuanian Deputy Minister of Transport and Communications Agne Vaiciukeviciute is leading an 11-member delegation on a five-day visit to Taiwan that arrived

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yesterday, the ministry said.

The delegation comprises Lithuanian officials and representatives from the electric bus industry, it said in a news release.

The delegation is set to visit Taiwan’s transportation agencies and leading electric bus manufacturers to explore the possibility of collaborating in the electric bus, smart and green transportation industries, it said.

They are also here to demonstrate the solidarity between two democratic allies and forge industry links, it added.

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