

DPP lawmaker slams Taipei City on Memorial Hall

STAFF WRITER, WITH CNA

A Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) legislator lashed out at the Taipei City Government yesterday for adopting double standards in attempting to protect the Chiang Kai-shek (CKS) Memorial Hall.

Double standards

At a news conference she called at the Legislative Yuan, DPP Legislator Lin Shu-fen said that in order to block the demolition of the wall surrounding the CKS Memorial Hall -- as decided by the Cabinet last Friday when it announced that the hall will be renamed "Taiwan Democracy Memorial Hall" -- the Taipei City Government had demonstrated a "double standards mentality" on the protection of historical sites.

Lin said the Taipei City Department of Cultural Affairs had scrambled on Tuesday to have the CKS Memorial Hall temporarily declared a heritage site in a desperate attempt to protect the hall's outer wall from being torn down.

Review

Department director Lee Yong-ping said on Tuesday that at the request of several residents and historians, the department had begun a review of the memorial's historical and cultural significance in accordance with the Cultural Heritage Preservation Law.

With the review process in progress, the hall has been temporarily designated a heritage site and therefore cannot be altered, Lee said.

Lin claimed that the city government was using double standards by moving to protect the outer wall of the CKS Memorial Hall -- which is only 27 years old -- while planning to tear down the wall around the Confucius Temple in Talungtung, which is nearly 200 years old, a plan dating back to when Ma Ying-jeou was mayor.

Approachable

Ma had agreed that the wall around the Confucius Temple should be torn down "to make it more approachable for the public," Lin said.

On Saturday, Taipei Mayor Hau Lung-bin said the plan to tear down the wall around CKS Memorial Hall required the approval of the city government.



US rights report faults Taiwan

BLEMISH: Cases of domestic violence, child abuse and sexual discrimination have been rising in recent years, but overall the nation obtained good marks on its rights record

By Charles Snyder

STAFF REPORTER IN WASHINGTON

"Strong social pressure not to disgrace their families discouraged abused women from reporting incidents to the police." - US State Department annual report on human rights

Abuse of women and children in Taiwan is serious and apparently a growing problem, the US State Department reported on Tuesday.

In its annual report on human rights violations around the world, the State Department described abuse of women, including domestic violence and rape, in Taiwan "a serious problem." It said child abuse "continues to be a widespread and growing problem."

The 15-page section of the human rights report gave Taiwan good grades overall for its human rights record and said Taiwan "authorities generally respected the human rights of citizens."

But it found lurid exceptions to that in the way society treats women and children.

As of November last year, it said, 61,508 cases of domestic violence had been reported, a 9 percent increase over 2004.

However, only 2,038 people were prosecuted for violence against spouses and only 1,527 were convicted.

Typically, jail sentences were less than six months.

"Strong social pressure not to disgrace their families discouraged abused women from reporting incidents to the police," the report said.

Rape, including spousal rape, remained a serious problem, but the report added that women's rights activists had criticized law enforcement agencies for bringing "only a small percentage of perpetrators to justice."

Of the 6,601 rape and sexual abuse reports filed with the Ministry of Interior (MOI) last year, prosecutors tried 1,825 cases and convicted 1,535 individuals.

Convicted rapists were generally given terms of five to 10 years in prison.

"Experts estimated that the total number of rapes was 10 times the number reported to the police," the report said.

Despite laws banning gender discrimination in the workplace, the report nevertheless found numerous instances of discrimination.

"Despite the law, women continued to be denied maternity leave or were forced to quit jobs due to marriage, age, or pregnancy. Women's advocates noted that women continue to be promoted less frequently, occupied fewer management positions and worked for lower pay than their male counterparts," the report said.

The Council of Labor Affairs estimated that women salaries were 85 percent that of their male counterparts for comparable jobs.

The report also focused on mistreatment and discrimination against foreign spouses, many of whom are brought to Taiwan through brokers whose advertisements "were frequently degrading to women."

For fees ranging from US\$7,000 to US\$10,000, brokers fly clients to Southeast Asian cities where they can choose from groups of "eligible" women.

"Several reports suggested that this commercialized process likened foreign spouses to property and contributed to their mistreatment," the report said.

Traffickers in spouse visas also bring many women to Taiwan for prostitution, the report added.

Trafficking for prostitution involved mostly Vietnamese, Indonesian and Thai women, the report said, adding that arrests of women from China, Hong Kong and Macau had "declined sharply during the year."

Child abuse in Taiwan jumped 26 percent from 2004 to 2005 and appeared to have climbed 25 percent during last year, MOI statistics showed. Ninety percent of abusers were parents, relatives or caregivers.

Through last September, 9,984 cases of child abuse had been reported, including cases of physical, mental or sexual abuse or harm resulting from guardian neglect, the State Department report said.

The report also cited cases of widespread discrimination and abuse against foreign workers.



Cabinet spokesman accuses AP, CNN of biased reporting

By Jimmy Chuang and Ko Shu-ling

STAFF REPORTERS

Cabinet spokesman Cheng Wen-tsang yesterday defended President Chen Shui-bian and Vice President Annette Lu in response to comments from Beijing and quotes used by the Associated Press (AP) and CNN.

The bickering began after Chinese Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing criticized Chen in comments to reporters.

On Tuesday, during this year's session of the National People's Congress in Beijing, Li criticized remarks Chen made on Sunday about Taiwan's status and cross-strait relations.

He described Chen as a "local official" and said Chen was "a person to be condemned by history."

"Such a comment is proof that a rude official from a rude country would naturally come up with such a rude remark," Cheng said during a press conference after yesterday morning's Cabinet meeting.

In a headline on Tuesday, CNN quoted an insult China had used to describe Lu. Although the article -- about Lu's bid for the presidency -- was provided by the AP, CNN placed the description of Lu as "scum of the earth" in the headline with quotation marks.

In response, Lu lodged complaints yesterday against AP and CNN for what she called defamation.

Calling the AP report "inexplicable," Lu criticized AP for sending a Chinese reporter based in Hong Kong to cover her announcement of her decision to run in the presidential primary.

Lu said the reporter had used remarks made in Beijing when she became vice president in 2000 with the goal of humiliating the nation's democratically elected leaders.

"The remarks are crude and nearly insane," she said.

Lu described the article as "false, biased and arrogant" and said that the reporter only "wrote Beijing's perspective" and "violated the basic principles of professional journalism."

Lu asked the public to support her and stand up for the nation's dignity.

"It is not about me. It is about the whole nation," she said. "It will be a serious problem if this matter is not dealt with appropriately because there will be more reports about Taiwan written from Beijing's perspective."

Cheng said that AP had responded by saying that its reporter was quoting the Chinese government's description of Lu and that CNN had then chosen to put the quote in its headline.

Cheng called reporters from AP and editors at CNN absurd and rude.

"These two companies are well-known and professional media," he said. "I would have thought that such rude phrasing only comes from reporters who have connections with China, have stayed in China for a long time or have no knowledge or background information about Taiwan," Cheng said.



Take to the hand

Chinese paramilitary police gesture at a photographer to stop taking pictures as they stand guard at the Great Hall of the People on the third day of the National People's congress in Beijing yesterday. Security remains tight around the capital as the congress continues its annual session.



Japan increases surveillance of China

AP, TOKYO

Japan plans to build a second electromagnetic surveillance facility to monitor Chinese military activity, reflecting growing concern over Beijing's arms buildup, a news report said yesterday.

The Defense Ministry was finalizing arrangements to have a facility constructed on southwestern Fukue Island, 1,050km southwest of Tokyo, the mass-circulation Sankei Shimbun said.

Data collected at such facilities will help Tokyo determine the capabilities and movements of Chinese military planes and vessels, and develop ways to block Chinese from picking up Japanese communications and electromagnetic surveillance, the Sankei and Yomiuri Shimbun reported.

An electromagnetic surveillance facility is already being built in the Miyako islands in Okinawa, the Sankei said in an unsourced story yesterday.

The islands are close to territory claimed by Japan and China.

The Miyako islands facility is slated for completion next year, the Sankei said.

However, the ministry had decided that an additional site would be necessary, the paper said.

A Defense Ministry spokeswoman, speaking anonymously following ministry protocol, refused to comment on the report.

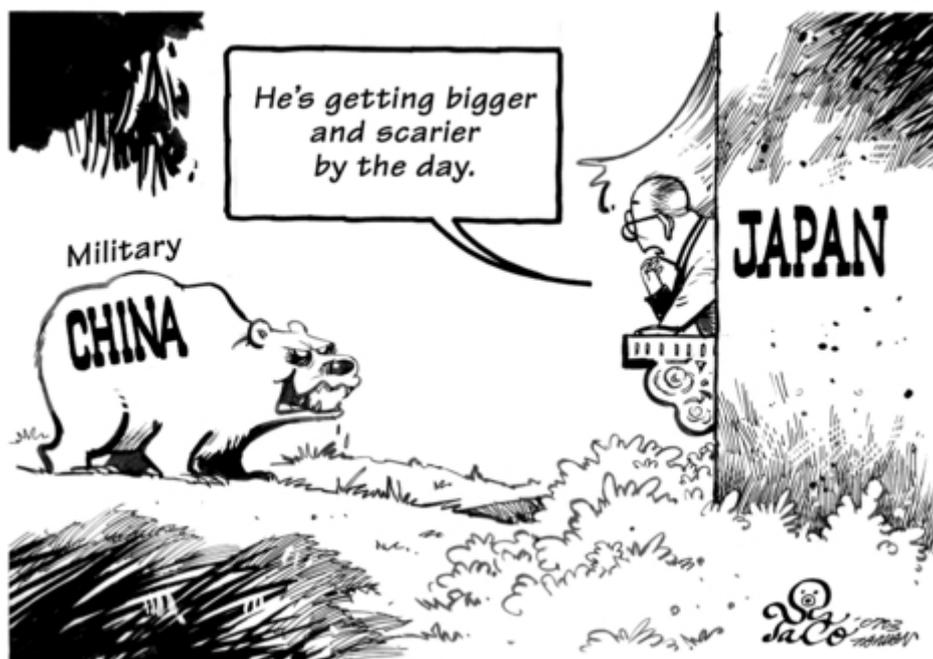
Japan's existing electromagnetic surveillance facilities are concentrated in the north of the country, where they mainly pick up radio waves from Russia, the newspapers said.

But Japan is increasingly shifting its focus to China, which has raised concern in Tokyo after announcing double-digit spending increases for its 2.5 million-member military nearly every year since the early 1990s.

Japan's Defense Agency listed China's military expansion as a top security concern in the region and Foreign Minister Taro Aso has repeatedly called China a threat -- drawing angry protests from Beijing.

Last October, a defense official said funds had been requested to build an

electromagnetic surveillance facility on the Miyako islands, but refused to comment on whether China would be the object of monitoring.



Bullet train a wonderful ride

By Dan Bloom

Taiwan hopes its new bullet train will prove to be something of an economic fast track, as well as a drawcard for tourists from overseas.

I recently took a ride on the train, from Chiayi to Taichung and back again, along with happy throngs of Lunar New Year sightseers -- family groups, kids, grandparents, college students, couples -- and it was a marvelous, fantastic experience.

While the HSR is not going as fast as the Shinkansen in Japan, it speeds along pretty

nicely.

The most fantastic part of the trip, from Chiayi to Taichung, may represent a technological breakthrough.

Most bullet train tracks around the world are straight and on flat land, more or less, with just a few gentle curves and hills to navigate.

The route between Taichung and Chiayi goes through some rugged, mountainous areas in northern Changhua County.

One second you are on the flat plains zooming along as most bullet trains do, then suddenly you start zipping up (or down, as the case may be) in a banked curve into rugged mountain passes and tunnels.

Not only is the view from the highlands to the plains below staggering, but the trip south from Taichung down to Chiayi puts the train on a rollercoaster-like sloping curve as the train exits from the last mountain tunnel, beginning a two-minute descent at high speed the likes of which I have never experienced.

Looking out the right side of the train, you can actually see the curving, sloping track ahead of you as the train gains speed and zooms down the loop-de-loop. It's a fantastic experience.

Dan Bloom

Chiayi