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Taipei, Beijing ink landmark water deal

## Taiwan promotes its isle claim in South China Sea

TAIPEI, Taiwan, July 20, (Agencies): As China builds artificial islands in a vast resource-rich South China Sea and neighbors in Southeast Asia brace for possible conflict, Taiwan is cutting carbon emissions and offering a hospital for humanitarian aid on the sea's largest natural islet to seek international approval for easing tension.

Taiwan's unusual use of Taiping Island in the heavily contested Spratly archipelago may appeal particularly to the United States, a staunch, long-time informal ally that has at least scrutinized the legal basis for Taiwan's maritime claims. Washington, seeking stable relations with China as well, has also urged the six claimants to cooperate rather than fight.

Taiwan, which lacks the diplomatic ties to negotiate with the other five governments with claims in the South China Sea, has installed \$1.29 million worth of solar panels on Taiping Island since 2011 to light a cluster of buildings and provide power for construction of a 200-meter (yard) pier due for completion by year's end, the head of the island's coast guard said Friday.

Panels covering 1,570 square meters (16,890 square feet), enough to save about 32,000 liters (8,450 gallons) of diesel fuel last year, also will supply electricity to a five-bed hospital and living quarters that accept seafarers of any nationality, Coast Guard Administration Minister Wang Chung-yi said.

Taiping receives about 10 foreign boats a year from China or Vietnam, usually during storms. The pier will make it easier for coast guard vessels or - if needed someday - naval ships to dock, allowing more medical supplies to reach the five-bed hospital with a rotating staff as well as a surgery ward. Taiwan also has built a military airstrip on the coast guard-controlled island.

"No one is in opposition. The United States approves," Wang said. "When the situation gets tense, our country's stance is to take a novel approach. Can't we put aside the dispute? Taiping Island has solar power and green energy that are telling the world we have a different perspective on operating it."

Taiwan's design for its 1,400-meter (4,590-foot) -long, 400-meter (1,312-foot) -wide islet contrasts to the campaigns by China and Vietnam to land-fill multiple islets, build military bases and drive oil rigs into the ocean floor near the Spratly and Paracel archipelagos. China had added some 2,000 acres (809 hectares) of land in the Spratly chain since last year, U.S. officials said.

Taiwan expects other countries, especially the United States, to respect its efforts, which follow the May 26 announcement of a South China Sea peace and resource-sharing initiative by President Ma Ying-jeou.

The 3.5 million-square-kilometer (1.4 million-square-mile) sea is rich in fisheries, supports about half the

world's commercial shipping and holds an estimated 7 billion barrels of oil reserves. Brunei and Malaysia claim parts of the same ocean.

In signs of growing tension, the Philippines reopened Subic Bay naval base this year and held military exercises with the United States and Japan to help counter any threats from China. Manila has also filed for arbitration in a United Nations court. Last year, Vietnam and China clashed over China's placement of an oil rig in waters that both sides claim, touching off deadly anti-Chinese riots in Vietnam.

### Also:

**TAIPEI:** China and Taiwan inked a landmark deal on Monday that will see water pumped from the Chinese mainland to a Taiwanese-controlled archipelago, in another sign of warming ties between the rivals.

The agreement will see water pumped from China's southeastern province of Fujian to the 100,000 residents of Taiwan's Kinmen County by 2017.

"The event is of historical significance when it comes to forging a path toward peaceful relations between the two sides," Kinmen county magistrate **Chen Fu-hai** said at the signing ceremony.

The heavily fortified Kinmen archipelago is just two kilometres from the mainland and was heavily shelled by Chinese forces in the late 1950s during a 44-day assault that killed 618 people.

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