



# Taiwan Newsletter

## Former President Lee Teng - hui passed away

Former president Lee Teng-hui passed away at 7:24pm on July 30th at Taipei Veterans General Hospital. He was 97 years old. The hospital stated the cause of death as septic shock and multiple organ failure. He was born on Jan. 15, 1923, in the farming community of Sanshi Village, Taihoku Prefecture — now New Taipei City's Sanzhi District during the Japanese colonial era, and rose to become mayor of Taipei and not only the Republic of China's (ROC) first Taiwan-born president, but its first directly elected one as well. Educated in the Japanese educational system of the time, Lee, who spoke Japanese, Hoklo (also known as Taiwanese), Mandarin and English, earned a bachelor's degree in agricultural science from National Taiwan University (NTU) in 1948, and appeared headed for an academic or civil service career, going on to earn a master's degree from Iowa State University in 1953 and a doctorate from Cornell University in 1968. His unparalleled contributions to democratizing the nation and his election earned him the nickname "Mr Democracy". During his time as president and as KMT leader he favored highlighting Taiwan's sovereignty and right to self-determination, and also pushed his special state-to-state model of cross-strait relations.

## Taiwan, Czech choose to live in democracy: Czech senate president

Visiting Czech Senate President Miloš Vystrčil said on August 31<sup>st</sup> that the biggest feature shared by Taiwanese and Czechs is that they both choose to live in democratic and free societies. Vystrčil praised Taiwan as beautiful, free and democratic during a speech at National Chengchi University in Taipei one day after his arrival heading an 89-member delegation. "I am convinced the most important common denominator of the people of Taiwan and the Czech Republic and their

biggest strength at the same time is the fact they chose to live in democracy, freely and voluntarily," Vystrčil said. Both Taiwan and the Czech Republic have endured difficult paths to win their democracy and freedom, with both paths sharing certain similarities, Vystrčil said. "I would never obey or accept a recommendation even if presented by the highest ranking and most powerful representatives that would weaken our independence, sovereignty and distinctiveness, while damaging freedom and democracy anywhere in the world," Vystrčil said.

## Taiwan's Legislature passed Citizen Judges Act

The Citizen Judges Act passed its final reading at the Legislature July 22 in Taipei City, marking a milestone in the government's ongoing efforts to reform Taiwan's judicial system and promote sentencing transparency, according to the Ministry of Justice. Under the legislation set to take effect Jan. 1, 2023, citizens aged 23 and above who have received at least a high school education and resided within a court's jurisdiction for at least four months can be randomly selected as a citizen or standby judge. The only exceptions are for certain professions like those working in law, the military or police; criminals; and the country's president, vice president and other heads of government agencies. The new system, which requires a panel of six citizen judges and three professional judges, will apply to criminal cases carrying a prison term of at least 10 years or involving intentional acts leading to homicide. A guilty verdict can only be reached with the consent of at least two thirds of the panel including one professional judge, while sentences must be agreed by a majority of the panel.

## U.S. health chief offers Taiwan 'strong' support in landmark visit

U.S. Health Secretary Alex Azar offered President Donald Trump's strong support for democratic Taiwan on Monday, telling President Tsai Ing-wen that her government's response to the coronavirus pandemic had been among the world's best. Azar arrived in Taiwan on August 10<sup>th</sup> as the highest-level U.S. official to visit in four decades, a trip condemned by China which claims the island as its own, further irritating Sino-U.S. relations. China has promised unspecified retaliation to Azar's trip. "It's a true honor to be here to convey a message of strong support and friendship from President Trump to Taiwan," Azar told Tsai in the Presidential Office, standing in front of two Taiwanese flags.

## Taiwan opened representative office in Somaliland

Taiwan has formally opened a representative office in Somaliland, a self-declared East African state, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs confirmed Monday. The opening ceremony was led by Lou Chen-hwa, Taiwan's chief envoy in Somaliland, and Yasin Hagi Mohamoud, Somaliland's foreign minister, with members of the foreign missions in Somaliland in attendance, MOFA said in a statement. A pre-recorded congratulatory message by President Tsai Ing-wen was played and Foreign Minister Joseph Wu delivered his remarks live via a video call during the ceremony, according to MOFA. The two governments signed a technical cooperation agreement at the ceremony, MOFA said, and Taiwan will send a technical mission to Hargeisa to work on different projects. In Tsai's video message, which was shared on her Facebook page, she said the friendship between Taiwan and Somaliland is based on the common values of freedom, democracy, justice and the rule of law.