

China Airlines, Air France to provide codeshare flights



Taipei, Jan. 3 (CNA) China Airlines, one of the country's leading airlines, announced Wednesday it will partner with Air France to provide three codeshare flights a week from April 16, to better serve the Taipei-Paris route.

The route will be flown by Air France, which announced last month its intention to return to Taiwan after a hiatus of 20 years, flying from Taiwan Taoyuan International Airport to Paris Charles de Gaulle Airport.

CAL flight CI-9237 from Taipei to Paris will depart at 10:25 a.m. from Taipei and arrive in Paris at 4:20 p.m. every Tuesday, Friday and Sunday, while flight CI-9238 from Paris to Taipei will depart on Monday, Thursday and Saturday at 1:35 p.m. from Paris and arrive in Taipei at 8:15 a.m. the next day.

CAL said it has high hopes for the new services, explaining that since both airlines are SkyTeam members, the route could expand their mutual networks and eventually maximize benefits to the airline alliance.

Currently, EVA Airways, a rival of CAL, is the only carrier to serve the Taipei-Paris route, with one round-trip flight per day, which it has offered since 1993.

Johnson Wan (溫宗翰), Air France-KLM Group's country manager for Taiwan, said Taipei will be the only Asian destination added to the Air France network in 2018.

Plans to reopen the Taipei-Paris route started nearly two years ago, Wan said, adding that the service could be especially appealing to business travelers, who are expected to account for more than half the passengers.

(By Lee Hsin-Yin)

Enditem/AW

EVA Air ranked among world's 20 safest airlines



Taipei, Jan. 4 (CNA) Taiwan-based EVA Airways (EVA Air) remains one of the safest airlines in the world, ranking in the top 20 on a 2018 list compiled by the website AirlineRatings.com.

In its latest report published on Jan. 3, the airline safety ratings website said EVA had maintained its place on the top-20 list for five years in a row among the 400-plus airlines that were monitored.

The safety rating for each airline is based on comprehensive analysis, utilizing information from the world's aviation governing bodies and leading associations, as well as government information and crash data, said AirlineRatings.com Editor-in-Chief Geoffrey Thomas.

However, the website does not consider just the number of incidents, he said.

"All airlines have incidents every day and many are aircraft manufacture issues, not airline operational problems," Thomas said. "And it is the way the flight crew handles incidents that determines a good airline from an unsafe one. So just lumping all incidents together is very misleading."

He said the top ranked airlines are standouts in the industry and are at the forefront of safety, innovation, and launching of new aircraft.

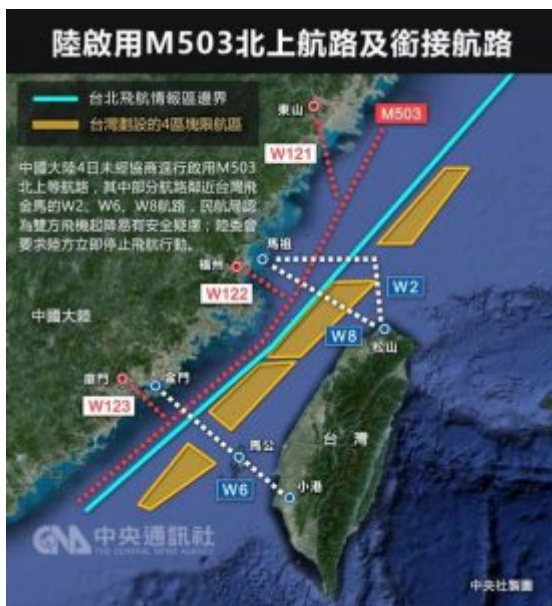
Apart from EVA Air, the other airlines ranked among the 20 safest in the world were Air New Zealand, Alaska Airlines, All Nippon Airways, British Airways, Cathay Pacific Airways, Emirates, Etihad Airways, Finnair, Hawaiian Airlines, Japan Airlines, KLM, Lufthansa, Qantas, Royal Jordanian Airlines, Scandinavian Airline System, Singapore Airlines, Swiss, Virgin Atlantic, and Virgin Australia, in alphabetical order.

The website also listed the 10 safest low-cost airlines, namely Aer Lingus, Flybe, Frontier, HK Express, Jetblue, Jetstar Australia, Thomas Cook, Virgin America, Vueling, and Westjet, in alphabetical order.

(By Lee Hsin-Yin)

Enditem/pc

Taiwan calls for talks with China on aviation issues



Taipei, Jan. 7 (CNA) Taiwan is calling for discussions with China on issues related to aviation management in the Taiwan Strait, in the wake of China's recent unilateral activation of four aviation routes close to the median line of the strait.

Last week, China reneged on a 2015 cross-strait agreement with Taiwan and unilaterally activated four new aviation routes in the Taiwan Strait – a northbound path on the M503 route and three east-west extension routes called W121, W122 and W123.

The M503 at its nearest point is only 7.8 km from the centerline of the strait and close to the Taipei Flight Information Region, while the W122 and W123 are close to Taiwan's offshore islands of Matsu and Kinmen, respectively.

China's move to open the four flight routes without prior negotiation with Taiwan has sparked concerns in Taipei about potential intrusions into domestic flight routes to and from

Matsu and Kinmen.

Detailing such concerns, Lin Kuo-shian (林國顯), director-general of Taiwan's Civil Aeronautics Administration (CAA), said Xiang'an International Airport, under construction on China's southeast coast, is just 10 kilometers from Kinmen.

The Xiang'an airport in Xiamen, which is being built to ease congestion at Gaoqi International Airport in the same city in Fujian Province, is scheduled to be completed in 2020, he noted.

If the new airport begins operations without prior cross-strait negotiations, it will have a huge impact of air traffic in and out of Shang Yi Airport in Kinmen, as it is even closer than the Gaoqi airport, Lin said.

Expressing similar views, another CAA official Shiue Shao-yi (謝少夷) said it is essential for civil aviation authorities in China and Taiwan hold discussions on flight route controls and other relevant issues before the Xiang'an airport opens.

He declined, however, to comment on aviation experts' speculations that when the new airport opens, a new flight route will be launched from Xiang'an to link with Taiwan's domestic routes to and from Kinmen.

It is not yet clear what routes Xiang'an airport will use, Shiue said.

(By Wang Shu-fen and Evelyn Kao)

Enditem/pc

Taiwan protests China's unilateral launch of new flight routes



Taipei, Jan. 4 (CNA) Taiwan's Mainland Affairs Council (MAC) protested strongly on Thursday against China's unilateral announcement of new flight routes close to the median line of the Taiwan Strait.

At a press conference, MAC Minister Chang Hsiao-yueh (蔣曉秋) said the decision was unacceptable, particularly if China intended to exert political pressure on Taiwan and impose a military threat under the guise of initiating new flight routes.

She called on China to immediately stop all flight operations on the routes and to initiate communication between the aviation authorities on both sides of the strait.

Such a move should have been discussed through cross-strait consultations, Chang said in response to an announcement by the Civil Aviation Administration of China (CAAC) earlier in the day that China was opening the M503 and other connecting routes to northbound commercial flights.

The CAAC said the move will help ease air traffic congestion

along China's southeast coast, meet the increasing demand for air travel west of the Taiwan Strait, and improve aviation safety.

The M503, which was opened in 2015 to China's southbound commercial traffic, was designed to avoid the routes used for domestic flights between Taiwan proper and its outlying Kinmen and Matsu islands and thus ensure aviation safety over the Taiwan Strait, the CAAC said, adding that it will maintain communication with its Taiwanese counterpart on the issue.

Taiwan's Ministry of National Defense (MND), however, said it was strongly opposed to China's latest decision, which was taken without any consultation with Taiwan.

If Chinese airplanes intrude into the air space east of the median line in the Taiwan Strait and pose any threat to Taiwan's aviation safety, Taiwan's military will take action to intercept, warn and repel the intruding aircraft, the MND said.

Meanwhile, the Presidential Office said the Taiwan government was fully aware of the situation and will ensure the country's aviation safety and national security.

China's decision on Thursday followed a similar pattern as when it first decided to open the M503 route for commercial flights. At that time, China started with an announcement on Jan. 12, 2015 that it planned to launch four new flight routes over the Taiwan Strait, including a north-south M503 route.

The announcement drew strong opposition from Taiwan, which expressed fears that the plan would compromise aviation safety in the region and infringe on Taiwan's sovereignty.

Beijing eventually agreed to move the M503 six nautical miles to the west of the median line in the Taiwan Strait and use it only for southbound flights. China also canceled its plans for the other routes.

The M503 flight path, therefore, fell 10.2 nautical miles west of the median line and was officially opened on March 29, 2015 for commercial flights, following consultations with Taiwan.

(By Miao Zong-han, Lin Ke-lun and Evelyn Kao)

Enditem/pc

Taiwan's president wants dialogue with China



Taipei, Oct. 26 (CNA) President Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文) called on the Communist Party of China (CPC) Thursday to begin dialogue with her administration to bring an end to hostilities between the two sides and the fear of war.

In her first response to the just-concluded CPC's 19th Party Congress that saw Chinese President Xi Jinping (习近平), also general secretary of the CPC, emerging as a formidable leader, Tsai said that China's ruling party has entered into "a whole new era of ruling."

Tsai said that when she was inaugurated May 20 last year, she urged the ruling parties on each side of the strait to begin

dialogue. After the CPC's party congress, she said that "now is the turning point" to change cross-Taiwan Strait relations.

Tsai again urged the two sides of the strait to display the wisdom that has carried both sides over 30 years to work for a breakthrough in cross-strait relations and long-lasting benefits for the people on both sides.

(By Shih Hsiu-chuan)

Enditem/J

US-China ties will not come at expense of Taiwan: ex-U.S. official



Taipei, Oct. 24 (CNA) The United States will not sacrifice Taiwan's interests in exchange for improved ties with China, a visiting former senior U.S. official said Tuesday in Taipei.

Daniel Russel, a former U.S. assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific affairs made the comments amid the ongoing 19th Chinese Communist Party Congress in Beijing and

an upcoming first ever trip to China by U.S. President Donald Trump. The remarks were also directed at continued speculation that Beijing's increased importance to U.S. foreign policy could pose a problem for Taipei.

Russel said that China has undergone major changes over the past five years under the leadership of Chinese President Xi Jinping, underscored by the country's growing economic strength and more active role in regional and global affairs.

Against this backdrop it is not surprising that China has become more important to U.S. foreign policy, he added.

"But should that be a problem for Taiwan? The common interests, the shared values, the institutional linkages, and the strong people-to-people ties and all the things I just described are like anchors, bonds that help ensure that improvements in U.S-China relations will never come at Taiwan's expense," he stressed.

Although the occupants of the White House and the Presidential Office have changed in recent years, what has not changed is the deep-rooted friendship between American and Taiwanese people, he said.

"What has not changed is U.S. policy, which is based on the Taiwan Relations Act and the Three Joint Communiques. What has not changed is America's enduring interest in the continued success, prosperity and self-determination of the people of Taiwan," he added.

Having said that, Russel also reiterated that the U.S. will not serve as an intermediary between Beijing and Taipei.

"One of my predecessors, Ambassador Winston Lord once said, 'Americans aren't smart enough to mediate between Chinese.'"

"At the end of the day it falls to the people of Taiwan and to those on the mainland to muster patience, creativity,

flexibility and effective communications necessary to manage relations and to resolve your differences,” he concluded.

Russel made the comments during a speech at National Chengchi University during his first-ever trip to Taiwan. He arrived on Sunday and is scheduled to leave on Wednesday.

During his stay, Russel will also visit government departments where he will learn about Taiwan’s political and economic development and government policies in the areas of diplomacy, national defense cross-strait relations, and exchange views on U.S-Taiwan links and future cooperation, according to Taiwan’s Foreign Ministry.

A career senior diplomat, Russel served as assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific affairs from July 2013 to March 2017. Before that, he served at the White House as special assistant to the president and National Security Council senior director for Asian affairs.

In April, he joined the Asia Society Policy Institute (ASPI), a think tank that tackles major policy challenges confronting the Asia-Pacific, where he serves as diplomat-in-residence and a senior fellow.

(By Joseph Yeh)

Enditem/AW

Lonely Planet names Kaohsiung 5th best city to visit in

2018



Taipei, Oct. 25 (CNA) Kaohsiung in southern Taiwan has been named as the fifth best city in the world to visit in 2018 by travel guide book publisher Lonely Planet.

Kaohsiung, a port city and the third most populous city in Taiwan after New Taipei and Taichung, was among Lonely Planet's list of 10 top cities in the world that its experts recommend travelers visit in 2018.

The list was published Tuesday as part of Lonely Planet's Best in Travel 2018 package that also identified the world's 10 top countries and 10 top regions to visit and 10 best travel values.

In the "Top Cities" list, Spain's Seville was ranked at the top, followed by Detroit in the United States, Canberra in Australia, and Hamburg in Germany.

From sixth to 10th were Antwerp in Belgium, Matera in Italy, San Juan in Puerto Rico, Guanajuato in Mexico and Oslo in Norway.

"Kaohsiung is surging with possibilities: visit before the world gets wind of it," Lonely Planet said in the description of the city accompanying the list that particularly highlighted the city's transition from an industrial port to a cultural hub.

“Warehouses by the harbor are morphing into galleries and theaters. World-class architecture is sprouting along the shore, from a beautiful public library to a spectacular concert venue that, when ready, should be among the best in Asia,” Lonely Planet wrote.

“The cultural calendar is packed full of exciting new festivals, and young chefs are injecting fresh ideas into southern Taiwanese cooking,” it said.

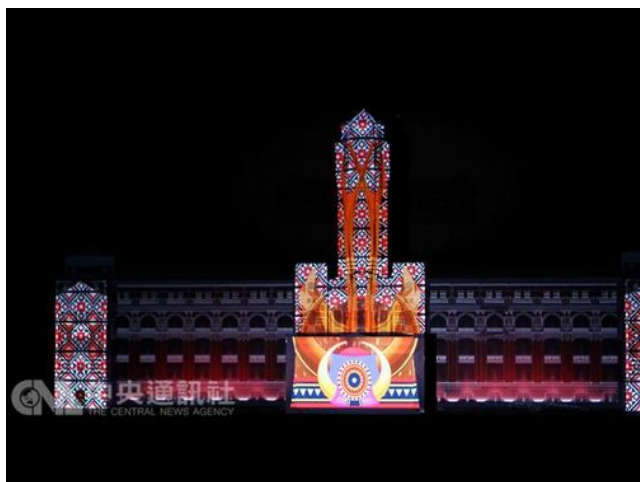
Other Kaohsiung highlights mentioned were the “spectacular” cruise terminal and light-rail system that are taking shape, and a new 88-meter “Eye of the Mountain” skywalk in the Xiaogangshan Recreation Area, from which hikers can view the Taiwan Strait.

In a statement previewing the article, Lonely Planet writer Piera Chen, who prepared the section on Kaohsiung, described the city this way: “Wherever you go, whether by metro or the city’s burgeoning fleet of public bikes, Kaohsiung greets with a laid-back maritime charm.”

(By Christie Chen)

Enditem/ls

Taiwan urges new model for cross-strait ties



Taipei, Oct. 18 (CNA) Leaders on the two sides of the Taiwan Strait should show wisdom, determination and patience to forge a new model for bilateral ties and lay a solid and long-lasting foundation for perpetual peace in the region, the Presidential Office urged Wednesday.

“We are keeping a close tap on the development in cross-strait relations and all situations in the region,” the Presidential Office said in a statement responding to remarks by Chinese President Xi Jinping earlier in the day.

Speaking at the opening of the 19th Congress of the Communist Party of China, Xi stressed Beijing’s intent to safeguard its “one China principle” and the “1992 consensus” in handling cross-Taiwan Strait ties.

He also said China will deal appropriately with changes in Taiwan’s situation and spare no effort to oppose Taiwan’s independence movement while maintaining peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait.

Xi’s comments offered little that was new, and the Presidential Office’s response essentially echoed remarks made on previous occasions by President Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文), including during her National Day address on Oct. 10.

In terms of cross-strait ties, the Presidential Office stressed that “we are fully committed to building peace in the

region and across the strait.”

The government has done its best to stabilize two-way relations, “extending maximum goodwill to the other side hoping to mend hostilities and differences step by step,” it said, noting that “the international community should have seen efforts made by Taiwan in this regard.”

Maintaining cross-strait peace and stability and creating benefits for the people are common goals of the leaders on both sides, the Presidential Office reiterated.

It also repeated a previous Tsai pledge: “We will not revert to the old path of confrontation, and we will not bow to pressure.”

The Mainland Affairs Council (MAC), the agency responsible for charting Taiwan’s policy toward China, said in a statement that the Chinese Communist Party’s advocacy of the “one China principle” and the “one country, two systems” formula will have trouble winning over the hearts of the Taiwanese people.

It called on Beijing to think of a new model in its dealings with Taiwan.

The MAC also expressed regret that Xi’s talk demonstrated Beijing’s longstanding stance of wanting to contain Taiwan, saying that long-term political disputes across the strait can be resolved, but man-made barriers and hostilities have led to confrontation and stalemate.

The MAC urged Beijing to engage in implementing policies conducive to “democracy, peace, fairness and justice,” and adopt new thinking to face a new relationship across the strait and become a genuine peacemaker and protector in the region.

(By C.H. Liao and Flor Wang)

Enditem/ls

President Tsai hoping to boost military ties with Taiwan's allies



Taipei, Oct. 19 (CNA) President Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文) told a group of senior military and police officers from Latin America and the Caribbean on Thursday that Taiwan is looking forward to deepening military exchanges and cooperation with other countries, particularly its diplomatic allies.

In a rapidly changing world, no country can face multiple challenges alone and must seek cooperation with others, Tsai told the officers from the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Paraguay – all Taiwan's diplomatic allies – and Peru.

Under Taiwan's military diplomacy policy, it is hoping to build military exchanges and cooperation with its allies through actions such as increased exchange visits by senior military personnel, military training and information sharing, she said.

Tsai said that since she took office in May 2016, exchange

visits by high-ranking officials of Taiwan and its allies have become more frequent.

She also expressed gratitude to Taiwan's diplomatic allies for their support of the country's efforts to participate in international organizations and programs.

(By Yeh Su-ping and Evelyn Kao)

Enditem/pc

Taiwan, U.S. sign MOU on defense affairs



Taiwan Defense Industry Association head Han Pi-hsiang (韓啟祥, front center) and U.S.-Taiwan Business Council President Rupert Hammond-Chambers (魯伯特·哈蒙德-錢伯斯, front second right)

Princeton, New Jersey, Oct. 18 (CNA) Taiwan Defense Industry Association head Han Pi-hsiang and U.S.-Taiwan Business Council President Rupert Hammond-Chambers signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) Tuesday to advance U.S. defense cooperation with Taiwan.

The signing of the MOU will not only boost collaboration on

defense affairs between Taiwan and the U.S., but will also create an integrated platform for the association members to extend exchanges on defense issues with the U.S., said Han.

Under the MOU, which was signed a day after the U.S.-Taiwan Defense Industry Conference that took place Oct. 15-17 in Princeton, New Jersey, the two sides will foster industrial cooperation, arrange mutual visits by specialists in various fields, and facilitate mutual understanding and learning, he added.

Hammond-Chambers for his part revealed that a conference will be held in Taipei next spring to increase business opportunities in the defense and security industries in both Taiwan and the U.S.

The annual conference, hosted by the U.S.-Taiwan Business Council since 2002, serves as a crucial platform for U.S. and Taiwan to discuss national security needs, weapons procurement and defense cooperation.

(By Rita Cheng and Isabel Wang)

Enditem/J