Presidential candidates halt campaigns after military chopper crash



President Tsai Ing-wen's (□□□, left) and Kuomintang (KMT) presidential nominee Han Kuo-yu (□□□).

Taipei, Jan. 2 (CNA) The three candidates running for president in Taiwan's Jan. 11 election announced Thursday they would temporarily suspend their campaigns, after eight armed forces members, including Chief of the General Staff Shen Yi-ming (□□□), were killed in a helicopter crash earlier that day.

President Tsai Ing-wen's (□□□) Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) said it would observe a period of mourning by suspending all campaign activities from Thursday through Saturday.

In a separate statement, Tsai said she had traveled to Yilan on Taiwan's eastern coast to oversee recovery efforts at the crash site, and had ordered the Ministry of National Defense (MND) to begin an investigation into cause of the accident.

As a sign of mourning, national flags at military installations around the country will be flown at half-mast for three days, Tsai said.

Meanwhile, Kuomintang (KMT) presidential nominee Han Kuo-yu (□□□) issued a statement paying tribute to the victims of the crash, while urging people to pray for the recovery of the five survivors.

The KMT likewise announced that it would suspend campaigning for a two-day period in the wake of the accident.

People First Party (PFP) nominee James Soong (□□□) canceled his campaign schedule for Thursday and Friday, and called on Tsai to focus on stabilizing the military's command structure, following the death of its highest-ranking officer.

According to the MND, Thursday's crash occurred when a UH-60M Black Hawk helicopter with 13 people on board was forced to attempt an emergency landing in a mountainous area of New Taipei City's Wulai District.

The chopper was traveling from Taipei to a military base in Dong'ao, Yilan County, where Shen was scheduled to visit troops in advance of the Lunar New Year, the ministry said.

(By Yu Hsiang, Yeh Su-Ping and Matthew Mazzetta) Enditem/AW

EVA Air ranked world's 3rd safest airline



Taipei, Jan. 3 (CNA) Taiwan-based EVA Airways has been ranked the world's third safest carrier for 2020, maintaining its place on the top 20 list for the seventh year in a row, according to the latest rankings, which were compiled by an airline safety and product rating review website.

In the report published Thursday by AirlineRatings.com, which in previous years named the 20 safest airlines without giving the order, EVA Air was ranked third among the 405 airlines reviewed.

In response, EVA Air said in a statement Friday that safety is the most important issue in the aviation industry and a red line that cannot be crossed.

The airline has a safety culture committed to high standards of discipline, in aviation safety, safety when undergoing repairs, safety on the ground and occupational safety, EVA Air said.

EVA Air trailed Qantas and Air New Zealand, the report said, and was ahead of Etihad, Qatar Airways, Singapore Airlines, Emirates, Alaska Airlines, Cathay Pacific Airways and Virgin Australia.

Rounding out the list were Hawaiian Airlines, Virgin Atlantic Airlines, TAP Portugal, SAS, Royal Jordanian, Swiss, Finnair,

Lufthansa, Are Lingus and KLM, according to the website.

Each airline’s evaluation is based on a comprehensive analysis, including audits from global aviation governing bodies and leading associations, government information, crash and serious incident records, profitability and fleet age, the website said.

AirlineRatings.com Editor-in-Chief Geoffrey Thomas said in the report that the 20 airlines are standouts in the industry and at the forefront of safety, innovation and the launching of new aircraft.

The website, started in 2013, also identified the 10 safest low-cost airlines, in alphabetical order, as Air Arabia, Flybe, Frontier, HK Express, IndiGo, Jetblue, Volaris, Vueling, Westjet and Wizz.

(By Lee Hsin-Yin) Enditem/AW

Taiwanese K-pop star named most beautiful face of 2019

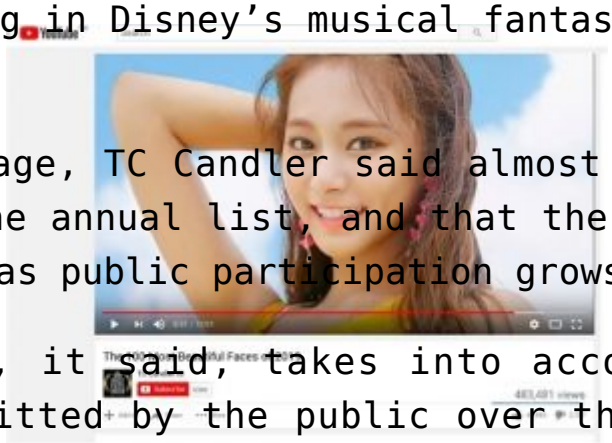
A screenshot taken from TC Candler's YouTube page.

Taipei, Dec. 28 (CNA) Chou Tzu-yu (□□□), the Taiwanese member of South Korean girl group Twice, was named the "most beautiful face of 2019" in a ranking released Friday by American film review site TC Candler.

Also known simply as Tzuyu, the 20-year old Tainan-native was the only Taiwanese who made it onto this year's list, which has been presented annually since 1990.

It was her fifth consecutive appearance on the prestigious global list, having been 13th in 2015, 8th in 2016, 3rd in 2017, and 2nd in 2018.

This year, Israeli model Yael Shelbia was No. 2 on the list, followed by Thai singer and model Lalisa Manoban, French model Thylane Blondeau, and English actress Naomi Scott, who is best known for starring in Disney's musical fantasy film Aladdin in 2019.



On its YouTube page, TC Candler said almost 40 countries are represented on the annual list, and that the "number seems to go up every year as public participation grows and expands."

The annual list, it said, takes into account millions of suggestions submitted by the public over the past couple of decades, and tries to put together "a list representative of the modern ideal of beauty," taking into consideration

criteria including aesthetic perfection, grace, elegance, class, poise, joy, promise and hope.

Along with the “100 Most Beautiful Faces of 2019,” TC Candler also released Friday the list of the “100 Most Handsome Faces of 2019,” with South Korean singer/dancer Jeon Jung-kook taking the top honor.

He was followed by Swedish YouTuber Felix Kjellberg, Canadian singer Shawn Mendes, South Korean singer Kim Tae-hyung, and American actor Jason Momoa.

(By Hou Wen-ting and Ko Lin) Enditem/ls

MEET TAIWAN Wins International Business Stevie Award

Remarkable International MICE Performance Affirmed

Organized by Taiwan’s Bureau of Foreign Trade, Ministry of Economic Affairs and implemented by the Taiwan External Trade Development Council (TAITRA), the Program on Promotion of Taiwan’s MICE Industry Development – MICE Industry Overall Program (more commonly referred to as MEET TAIWAN) applies innovative public relations approaches and marketing strategies, setting itself apart and being recognized at the

16th Stevie International Business Awards.

To promote the advantages of Taiwan’s MICE environment, strengthen international presence, and market Taiwan’s MICE brand, MEET TAIWAN plans annual marketing strategies as well as integrated public relations events and media operations including three major approaches: High Five Taiwan, Picture Taiwan, and Dive into Taiwan. The success of MEET TAIWAN’s efforts were recognized with a Bronze Award at the 2019 Stevie Awards for the Communications or PR Campaign of the Year—Travel & Tourism category.

One of MEET TAIWAN’s original projects was High Five Taiwan. A visual and interactive experience that showed VR videos at major incentive travel exhbitions and promotional events around the world, the official website would simultaneously hold a digital event to invite the globe’s netizens to upload selfies of themselves high-fiving with Taiwan. Another project was Picture Taiwan —Taiwan’s first one-stop MICE cloud database that provides Taiwan incentive travel information at any time and place utilizing chat bots and big data.

MEET TAIWAN organizes two annual large-scale experience activities, namely the Asia Super Team competition and SENSE Taiwan familiarization tour, that are main components of Dive into Taiwan. Through the combination of innovative on-line-to-off-line marketing approaches and a game competition mechanism, Taiwanese incentive travel experiences were upgraded.

The International Business Awards, organized by the Stevie Awards from the United States, is the only business rating and selection event in the world; hence, it is often referred to as the Oscar Awards for business. The Stevies was launched in 2002 to honor the achievements and remarkable performances of enterprises in a variety of specialist fields. This year, more than 4,000 business organizations and individuals from 74

countries around the world participated in the competition. The international judging committee was composed of more than 250 executives and professionals from various industries.

Six Taiwan-based airlines praised for disease prevention work



Taipei, Dec. 18 (CNA) A total of six Taiwan-based international airlines were honored for their disease control and prevention strategies at a ceremony in Taipei Wednesday. The six airlines, Taiwan's China Airlines, EVA Air, Uni Air, Mandarin Airlines, Tigerair Taiwan, and Far Eastern Air Transport were designated enterprises that showed excellence in disease prevention after undergoing a joint evaluation initiated this year.

Representatives of all the airlines, except Far Eastern Air Transport, were present at the ceremony.

The evaluation was conducted by the Taiwan Centers for Disease Control (CDC), Civil Aeronautics Administration, and Occupational Safety and Health Administration.

Infectious disease physician Chang Feng-yee (□□□), convener of the evaluation team, said assessments were made based on 25 indicators that reflected usual maintenance, workplace safety, health, and emergency responses.

From the assessment, it was found that close to 90 percent of the Taiwanese airlines' ground staff and cabin crew were vaccinated against measles, Chang said.

In addition, the airlines provided passengers with surgical masks upon request.

According to a separate statement issued by the CDC, most of the airlines either subsidized or promoted measles vaccinations for employees.

China airlines was able to provide long-sleeved protective clothing, protective shoe covers and headgear in the event of emergencies during flights, according to the statement.

EVA Air was further honored with the top prize for being the only airline to establish a medical system to track the vaccination and health status of employees, according to the statement.

EVA has also developed a system that can quickly and easily access information about people who have been exposed to individuals with infectious diseases while on board flights to help relevant health units track them down, according to the statement.

Meanwhile, Chou Jih-haw (□□□), CDC director-general, said the increase in international travel has elevated the risk of cross-border transmission of infectious diseases and only by embracing preventative measures can the threat be reduced.

The CDC also reminded people to travel with airlines that show excellence in disease prevention, urging them to better understand the risks involved in the places they are visiting, and to take protective measures.

(By Chen Wei-ting and William Yen)
Enditem/AW

U.S. bill mandates report on Chinese interference in Taiwan election



Washington, Dec. 17 (CNA) The U.S. Senate on Tuesday gave final passage to the 2020 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), a provision of which mandates a report on any Chinese interference in Taiwan's elections.

According to the bill, the U.S. Director of National Intelligence is required to submit the report to Congress within 45 days after Taiwanese head to the polls on Jan. 11.

The NDAA, an annual bill to authorize appropriations and set

policy for the Department of Defense (DOD), had faced a rare delay this year, as competing versions of the bill passed in both the House of Representatives and Senate.

Following negotiations, however, a reconciled version of the bill passed the House last week with a 377-48 margin, and was approved by the Senate Tuesday in an 86-8 vote.

The bill will now be sent to the White House, where President Trump has said he intends to sign it into law.

In relation to Taiwan, the NDAA will require the Director of National Intelligence to report to Congress on the issue of Chinese interference in Taiwan's Jan. 11 elections, as well as U.S. efforts to disrupt those activities.

The report, the bill states, must assess "whether and to what extent China conducted influence operations," and provide an identification of the agencies involved and a description of the tactics used.

In a separate section of the bill, the DOD is required to report within 180 days on U.S.-Taiwan engagement in the area of cybersecurity.

In addition to offering an overview of current cybersecurity cooperation, the DOD will assess the feasibility of establishing a "high-level, interagency" cybersecurity working group between the two sides.

Finally, the bill contains a non-binding "sense of Congress" resolution, which urges the strengthening of defense and security ties with Taiwan, in areas including arms sales, exchange programs for military personnel and the transit of U.S. vessels through the Taiwan Strait.

On Wednesday, Taiwan Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokeswoman Joanne Ou (□□□) thanked Congress for its bipartisan passage of the bill, which she said demonstrated lawmakers' continued

support for military cooperation and Taiwanese democracy.

(By Chiang Chin-yeh and Matthew Mazzetta) Enditem/AW

Taiwan, HK on frontline in battle for press freedom: CPJ report



Image taken from the website of the Committee to Protect Journalists

Taipei, Dec. 17 (CNA) Taiwan and Hong Kong "are on the frontlines of the battle for press freedom" due to efforts by the Chinese government to shape public opinion, according to a report published Monday by the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ).

The report, titled "One Country, One Censor: How China undermines media freedom in Hong Kong and Taiwan" was written by CPJ Asia Program Coordinator Steven Butler.

"China has become a top global economic power, and is fast expanding its military reach beyond its borders," Butler said

in the introduction to the report.

“It is simultaneously trying to influence the global public through the media to accept and support China’s growing role in the world,” he continued.

Taiwan and Hong Kong are on the frontlines of the battle for press freedom, as China has utilized various efforts to “influence editorial content and sometimes to manipulate public opinion” in the two regions, according to Butler.

In Taiwan, government officials and legislators are struggling to find ways to cope with China’s growing influence on local legacy media and to “counter a deluge of disinformation apparently aimed at manipulating public opinion as Taiwan approaches general elections Jan. 11, 2020,” Butler said.

Butler cited the example of Want Want Holdings Ltd., which owns several media outlets in Taiwan including the China Times, one of the four largest newspapers in Taiwan, as having engaged in questionable business practices with China.

The China Times once disguised advertising from the government of the Chinese province of Fujian as news stories in 2012, which led to the paper being fined NT$1.8 million (US$59,166), as Taiwan bans advertising by the Chinese state, Butler noted.

At the time, Want Want’s chairman questioned whether these ads violated national security.

Butler also mentioned a report published in April 2019, which found that Want Want’s Chinese branch has received NT$17.8 billion in subsidies from the Chinese government since 2004. However, Taiwan’s Mainland Affairs Council said at the time that it is not against the law for Taiwan companies to take subsidies from the Chinese government.

In June this year, the paper was accused of downplaying Hong Kong’s massive pro-democracy protests, and was found to have

removed its past reporting on the June 4, 1989, Tiananmen Square massacre, Butler went on.

Butler said that authorities in Taiwan fear that China is spreading false news stories and manipulating social media in an attempt to sway January's elections, but so far, legislative approaches to block Chinese interference lack a consistent strategy.

"How to maintain Taiwan's openness while preventing unwelcome manipulation by a hostile political force – let alone a giant next door whose economy is key to Taiwan's prosperity – is a riddle for which there isn't yet a satisfying answer," Butler said.

In Hong Kong, "Chinese interests dominate commercial media," Butler said, with nine of 26 mainstream media outlets controlled by Chinese authorities or corporations led by Communist Party members.

With these ownership changes and incidences of violence towards journalists, many foreign correspondents in the region also fear that their critical reporting will have other consequences on their work, Butler said, including being blocked from working in China or having their visa revoked.

"As China ratchets up the pressure on Hong Kong media, it's not clear where or if it will stop," Butler concluded.

(By Lawrence Chiu and Chiang Yi-ching) Enditem/AW

New Taoyuan airport control tower unveiled



Taipei, Dec. 16 (CNA) The new control tower that opened at Taiwan Taoyuan International Airport on Monday will help boost the airport's flight handling capacity while also serving as a new landmark, Transportation Minister Lin Chia-lung (□□□) said Monday.

Calling the tower a "new national landmark," Lin said the control tower's unveiling represents an important milestone as the airport moves toward becoming a "smart airport" in the future.

Built at a cost of NT$1.27 billion (US$41.6 million) over three years, it is equipped with state-of-the-art technology that integrates 15 different systems, making it easier for air traffic controllers to monitor flight data, Lin said at the inauguration ceremony.

The new tower, he said, will help meet increasing passenger demand as the airport currently handles over 700 flights per day, compared with around 100 when the old control tower was built 40 years ago.

The 65-meter-tall tower is over 20 meters taller than the old control tower, offering air traffic controllers a clearer view

of the airport’s runways, and it can sit 11 controllers at one time, instead of four in the old structure.

Those features along with its advanced technology will enable the new control tower to handle 1,000 flights per day, compared to the more than 700 a day at present that was putting stress on the old control tower, according to the airport.

As of Monday, more than 268,000 flights had taken off or landed at the airport so far this year, Lin said, and the government has estimated that the number could reach 400,000 in 20 years.

Beyond the technical features that should give air traffic controllers a better working environment, Lin also highlighted the tower’s design, which was inspired by the unique shape of the “Queen’s Head,” a geological formation in Yehliu Geopark in northeastern Taiwan.

Also at the ceremony, Civil Aeronautics Administration (CAA) head Lin Kuo-shian (□□□) pointed to another feature of the new control tower that should help air traffic controllers do their jobs – a simulator room for training purposes.

The NT$75 million room, which is three meters high and has a four-meter radius, surrounds air traffic controllers with a 360-degree wall covered with monitors that simulate the airport, and it can be used to have them respond to various scenarios, he said.

(By Wu Reui-chi and Joseph Yeh) Enditem/ls

Entire world is watching Taiwan’s elections: Steve Bannon



Former White House Chief Strategist Steve Bannon (CNA file photo)

Taipei, Dec. 14 (CNA) Former White House Chief Strategist Steve Bannon said Saturday that “the entire world is watching what happens” in Taiwan’s Jan. 11 elections, calling “a free and independent Taiwan” the ultimate rebuttal of the Chinese political project.

Bannon, a figure associated with America’s far-right, promoted hawkish policies against China during his seven months in the Trump administration, and has more recently joined fugitive Chinese billionaire Guo Wengui (□□□) in a series of broadcasts attacking China’s political leadership.

In a pre-recorded video address to a forum on Taiwan-Japan relations, organized by the conservative Formosa Republican Association in Taipei, Bannon said that Taiwan’s elections, along with the recent pro-democracy protests in Hong Kong, played a vital role in thwarting China’s quest for global dominance.

He accused the Chinese government of “enslaving” its people and aggressively expanding its power under the guise of the

“One Belt, One Road” initiative and the telecoms company Huawei.

In light of this threat, Bannon said the Trump administration had sought to “confront China on multiple fronts,” including the West Pacific and the South China Sea.

“This is why January’s election, particularly the reelection of President Tsai Ing-wen (□□□), is so important,” he said, arguing that Tsai “represents the banner of freedom…and self-determination.”

Placing Taiwan in the context of a larger conflict between China and the West, Bannon argued that Taiwan’s upcoming elections are “the single most important event we have in front of us.”

“As goes Taiwan, so goes Asia. And as goes Asia, so goes the rest of the world,” he said.

At the end of his remarks, Bannon explained that he had been prevented from traveling to Taiwan by the ongoing impeachment proceedings against President Trump, but added that he hoped to visit in the weeks after the election.

“I look forward to coming over in January and celebrating,” he said.

(By Matthew Mazzetta) Enditem/AW

Recognizing Beijing imperils

Taiwan allies' sovereignty: US official



U.S. State Department official Jennifer Spande.

Washington, Dec. 9 (CNA) A U.S. State Department official warned Monday that allies of Taiwan who switch recognition to Beijing could be imperiling their sovereignty, citing risks such as debt and Chinese influence in domestic policymaking.

Speaking at the Global Taiwan Institute in Washington, Jennifer Spande, deputy director for Australia, New Zealand and Pacific Islands, reaffirmed the U.S. position that the Chinese campaign to steal Taiwan's diplomatic allies is a threat to stability in cross-strait relations.

Spande said the U.S. was not trying to dictate to anyone, but rather counseling prudence regarding the sovereignty issues involved in changes in policy by Taiwan's allies in the Pacific, so that the countries can remain "free from foreign coercion or domination."

"A region in which countries maintain their freedom of choice will be a more prosperous and secure one," Spande said.

China has successfully pressured seven countries around the world (including two in Oceania) to sever formal ties with Taiwan and recognize Beijing in the last three years, leaving

Taiwan with only 15 diplomatic allies.

Despite the trend, however, newly-elected governments in both the Marshall Islands and Tuvalu have reaffirmed their support for Taiwan, Spande said.

Spande highlighted comments by Tuvalu Foreign Minister Simon Kofe, who said the risks of relations with China include debt as well as pressure to allow the construction of artificial islands and military bases.

More broadly, Spande praised Taiwan as a long-term partner in the Oceania region that works with the U.S. in areas such as natural disaster response, environmental protection and efforts to strengthen the rule of law, and she said the U.S. government hoped to expand areas of bilateral cooperation.

As an example, Spande cited the presence of the State Department's senior official for APEC, Sandra Oudkirk, at the inaugural U.S.-Taiwan Pacific Islands Dialogue, which was held in Taipei in October.

(By Chiang Chinye and Matthew Mazzetta)Enditem/ls

Prague poised to establish city-to-city ties with Taipei



Prague Mayor Zdenek Hrib (left) and Taipei Mayor Ko Wen-je (right) met in Taipei in March

Berlin, Dec. 12 (CNA) The city council of Prague in the Czech Republic passed a motion to establish “sisterhood ties” with Taipei Thursday.

Prague city council voted 39-0 to approve the motion, with two abstentions.

Prague Mayor Zdenek Hrib announced last week that he will sign an agreement with Taipei Mayor Ko Wen-je (□□□) in January when Ko visits the Czech capital to boost bilateral trade, tourist, cultural and educational exchanges between the two cities.

Hrib said that Prague will send students to Taipei to learn Chinese, as well as study Taiwan’s digitization of healthcare and development of metro systems.

He also revealed that Prague Zoo expects to be gifted a pangolin from Taipei.

Prague terminated its city-to-city agreement with Beijing in October after a dispute over the removal of Beijing’s “one China” policy clause from the agreement.

(By Flor Wang and Lin Yu-li) Enditem/AW