Pilot union condemns FAT decision to suspend all flights



Taipei, Dec. 12 (CNA) Taoyuan Pilots Union on Thursday condemned Far Eastern Air Transport Corp (FAT) after an unexpected announcement earlier in the day that the company will end all flight operations starting Friday, calling on the government to help FAT pilots find work at other airlines.

In a press statement, the union said FAT's announcement clearly violated labor laws that stipulate a 60-day notice to the labor authorities before major layoffs.

The decision by FAT also seriously infringed on the rights of its 1,000-plus employees and customers. The union urged the government to step in and compel the airline to offer remedies that safeguard the rights of its staff.

The Taipei-based medium-sized international carrier announced Thursday on its website that all flight operations would end with effect from Friday, due to financial difficulties. However, later that evening, the company's online statement was revised to read that operations are being "suspended" rather than terminated.

That change came after an earlier follow-up press event by FAT

Deputy General Manager Huang Yu-chi (□□□) caused confusion when he said the airline was “suspending” flight operations temporarily due to a shortage of funding, which he estimated as being around NT$30 million (US$979,751).

Huang promised to protect the rights of the company’s 1,024 employees and said FAT had contacted the Taipei City Department of Labor to discuss layoff issues.

He did not say when or how many staff the airline would sack.

However, according to a purported internal FAT memo circulating online, most of the workforce will be laid off with only a handful retained to deal with the closure of the airline.
Meanwhile, the Taipei City Department of Labor said if the airline proceeds with a major layoff without giving the required 60-day notice, the matter will be reported to the Ministry of Labor, which could take legal action against FAT Chairman Chang Kang-wei (□□□) and bar him from leaving the country.

Department of Labor head Lai Hsiang-lin (□□□) said the department will conduct labor inspections at FAT’s Taipei headquarters Friday to determine if the company is suspending or closing down its operations.
FAT employees that are sacked can apply for government issued unemployment benefits. In addition, a central government fund will also pay the unpaid salaries of FAT staff if the airline cannot pay them for the time being, according to Lai.
A FAT union consultant told CNA that the union is barely operational after many union leaders left the company following a labor dispute in 2017.

The authorities estimate that FAT’s decision will inconvenience 3,408 passengers, while the airline could face a fine up to NT$3 million for not meeting its flight commitments.

Established in 1957, FAT declared bankruptcy in May 2008 but resumed operations three years later and completed bankruptcy restructuring in October 2015.
(By Wu Hsin-yun, Liang Pei-ching and Joseph Yeh) Enditem/AW

Taiwan jets intercept Chinese war planes in Taiwan Strait



Photo for illustrative purposes / CNA file photo

Taipei, March 31 (CNA) Taiwan's Air Force scrambled several fighter jets Sunday when two military aircraft from China crossed the median line of the Taiwan Strait, according to the Ministry of National Defense (MND).

The Taiwan Air Force jets intercepted two J-11 fighter planes from the People's Liberation Army of China when they crossed the median line, MND spokesman Chen Chung-chi (□□□) said.

The Chinese fighter planes entered Taiwan's southwestern airspace at 11 a.m. and retreated to the west side of the median line after they were issued a radio warning, according to a statement issued by the MND.

According to local media, the incident triggered a 10-minute standoff between Taiwan and China warplanes.

Air Force Officer Wang Chun-hsiung (□□□) told CNA that Taiwan's military has standard procedures for dealing with such incidents and will dispatch surveillance units if China's military aircraft enter Taiwan's air defense identification zone or cross the median line in the strait.

Taiwan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) said on its Twitter that the Chinese war planes made "intentional, reckless and provocative action" and violated a long-held tacit agreement by crossing the median line.

"We've informed regional partners and condemn China for such behavior," MOFA said.

Presidential Office spokesman Alex Huang (□□□) condemned that China's act not only lacked international responsibility, but was also a deliberate provocation that undermines regional security and stability.

He described the act of the Chinese warplanes crossing the median line as destruction of the status quo in the strait.

"The Republic of China government strongly condemned such an act," Huang said.

(By Matt Yu, Emerson Lin and William Yen)
Enditem/pc/e

Passengers can now buy Taiwan

High Speed Rail tickets via Facebook



Taipei, March 28 (CNA) Passengers can now purchase Taiwan High Speed Rail tickets via Facebook Messenger, even up to just one hour before departure, the Taiwan High Speed Rail Corp. (THSRC) announced Thursday.

Travelers not only can purchase tickets through Facebook Messenger but also check their reservations and make other ticket-related inquiries through the messaging platform, according to THSRC.

The platform will guide travelers to check timetables and ticket availability and make seat reservations and online payments through an app called T Express.

The high speed rail, which began service Jan. 5, 2007, connects major cities in western Taiwan between Taipei and Kaohsiung.

The 349.5-kilometer rail system is a popular method for traveling up and down the island due to its speed.

(By Wang Shu-fen and Chung Yu-chen)
Enditem/J

Taiwan Taoyuan Airport ranked 13th best in the world



Taipei, March 28 (CNA) Taiwan Taoyuan International Airport ranks 13th among the world's 100 best airports, based partly on its cleanliness and immigration and security services, according to the Skytrax 2019 World Airport Awards that were released Thursday.

The 13th place ranking was the best ever for the Taoyuan airport in the Skytrax awards, was three places higher than last year, and put the airport in 8th place among other top Asian gateways.

In the various categories of the awards, the Taoyuan airport's immigration service was listed as the 4th best in the world, and its staff and baggage delivery services were ranked 7th.

The airport's cleanliness and security services were ranked the 8th worldwide, while its accessible facilities for passengers with reduced mobility were rated the 9th best.

The Skytrax World Airport Awards are based on votes by customers in the world's largest annual airport customer

satisfaction survey.

This year, Singapore's Changi Airport retained the top position, followed by Japan's Tokyo International Airport Haneda.

Rounding out the top five were South Korea's Incheon International Airport, Qatar's Hamad International Airport and Hong Kong International Airport, in that order.

(By Lee Hsin-Yin)
Enditem/pc

Taiwan blasts China over its 'barbaric behavior' in Czech Republic



Taipei, March 29 (CNA) Taiwan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) on Friday blasted China for what it called "barbaric behavior" after Taiwan's representative in the Czech Republic was forced out of an economic meeting held recently in the Central European country.

Wang Chung-I (□□□), head of the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in Prague, was removed from the meeting after a Chinese embassy official there protested his participation, according to a foreign ministry statement.

The economic conference on March 27, held for the 19th year, was organized by the Czech Ministry of Trade and Industry and saw the participation of more than 100 officials from abroad.

The “barbaric actions” undertaken by China will only make more Taiwanese reject the “one China” principle touted by China’s leaders, MOFA said, and it blamed China’s Foreign Ministry as the biggest culprit for the continued deterioration of cross-strait ties.

Taiwan has already expressed grave concerns over the incident to the Czech government, MOFA said, but added that it hoped that exchanges between the two sides can continue to proceed as usual.

According to sources familiar with the matter, the incident was the result of Prague Mayor Zdenek Hrib’s defiance in visiting Taiwan, despite strong objections from Beijing.

Hrib arrived in Taiwan earlier this week, during which he met with Taipei Mayor Ko Wen-je (□□□) and also attended the Smart City Summit & Expo at Taipei Nangang Exhibition Center from March 26 to 29.

(By Elaine Hou, Lin Yu-li and Ko Lin)
Enditem/ls

Tsai urges Taiwan political parties to reject ‘one country, two systems’



Taipei, Jan. 5 (CNA) President Tsai Ing-wen (□□□) on Saturday called on all political parties in Taiwan to reject the “one country, two systems” formula devised by China and forget about the “1992 consensus.”

In a press conference with foreign media in Taipei, Tsai said she hoped all the political parties in Taiwan would send a clear message to China, based on the wishes of the Taiwan people.

“Do not mention the ‘1992 consensus’ again since that phrase has been defined by China as the ‘one country, two systems’ mechanism, which has left no flexibility for interpretation,” Tsai said.

“By emphasizing ‘one China’ and ‘one country, two systems’, particularly in the context of the so-called ‘1992 consensus,’ China has made clear their political intentions towards Taiwan and their steps for unification,” she said.

Tsai said that as a democracy, Taiwan’s cross-strait interaction must follow the wishes and oversight of its

people. “Therefore, any discussions must be between governments that are representative of the people of both sides,” Tsai told the 47 foreign correspondents from the United States, Japan, Europe and elsewhere, at the news conference at the Presidential Office.

On Wednesday, Chinese President Xi Jinping (□□□) said a speech commemorating the 40th anniversary of the “Message to Compatriots in Taiwan” that China must be reunified.

He said China is willing to talk with any party in Taiwan to push forward the political process as long as the party accepts the “one China principle.”

However, “we make no promise to renounce the use of force and reserve the option of taking all necessary means” to serve that end, while China continues to seek “peaceful reunification,” Xi said.

In his speech, he defined the “1992 consensus” as “the two sides of the strait belonging to one China, and working together to seek the unification of the nation” and said the one country, two systems formula is the best approach to achieving reunification.

The “1992 consensus” refers to a verbal agreement reached in 1992 between the then Kuomintang (KMT) government of Taiwan and Chinese communist officials. The agreement has been consistently interpreted by the KMT to mean that both sides of the Taiwan Strait acknowledge there is only “one China,” with each side free to interpret what “China” means.

However, Beijing has never publicly voiced support for the second part of the KMT interpretation.

Tsai said Xi has been trying to skirt the democratic process by calling for talks with individual political parties instead of with the Taiwan government, which is elected by the people of Taiwan.

“China’s plan to engage in political consultation with the political parties instead of the democratically elected government of Taiwan is a continuation of its deliberate campaign to undermine and subvert our democratic process and create division in our society,” Tsai said.

She called on the international community to stand with Taiwan in the face of the threats from China.

If the international community does not help and support Taiwan, she said, the country will become another victim of China’s pressure.

China should pay closer attention to issues that affect the lives of the Taiwan people, Tsai said, adding that for example, China should be working with Taiwan and other countries in the region to help combat African swine fever (ASF).

Authorities in Taiwan have deep concerns that the current outbreak of ASF in China could spread to Taiwan and Kinmen, which is only about 2 kilometers east of the mainland Chinese city of Xiamen.

Tsai also called for the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) to coordinate the efforts in the region to prevent the spread of ASF, saying Taiwan has good experience in disease prevention and is willing to make a contribution.

(By Yeh Su-ping and Frances Huang)
Enditem/pc

Su Tseng-chang named as new premier



Taipei, Jan. 11 (CNA) President Tsai Ing-wen (□□□) announced Friday that former Premier Su Tseng-chang (□□□) will lead the new Cabinet, in a major reshuffle.

Su will replace Lai Ching-te (□□□), who resigned shortly before, along with the rest of the Cabinet, in preparation for the reshuffle.

At a press conference after the Cabinet's en mass resignation, Tsai said Su has the experience, will and ability to serve well in that post again.

(By Elizabeth Hsu)
Enditem/pc

Taiwan selected world's fifth

most friendly country in 2018



Taipei, Jan. 9 (CNA) Taiwan was selected the fifth most friendly country in the world in 2018 by customers of Booking.com — one of the largest e-commerce travel companies in the globe.

Erluanbi, the southernmost tip in Taiwan, was chosen as the most friendly travel destination in the country, according to Booking.com, with Taiwanese travelers identifying the friendliness of a destination as an important element in deciding whether to visit.

Australia, the Czech Republic, Poland and New Zealand were the top four countries on the list, while Romania, Hungary, Iceland, Serbia, and Greece rounded off the top 10, according to the website, which released the ranking as part of its 2018 Guest Review Awards.

In 2018, 759,845 travel accommodation providers in 219 countries and areas received a Guest Review Award based on guest comments. Italy retained the top spot with 106,513 lodgings winning awards, Spain came second with 46,646 and France was third with with 45,286, according to the website.

Taiwan was ranked 33rd in terms of Guest Review Awards, an improvement of three places from 2017, with 5,212 accommodation operators receiving awards.

Bed and breakfast, hotels and youth hostels were the most popular accommodation among travelers visiting Taiwan in 2018, the website said.

(By Chen Wei-ting and Flor Wang)
Enditem/AW

Skytrax World Airline Awards names Air Astana a winner seven years in a row



London, UK – Air Astana, the flag carrier of Kazakhstan, has been recognised for 4 Star service excellence, retaining the accolade of “Best Airline in Central Asia and India” in the Skytrax World Airline Awards for the seventh consecutive year. The prestigious awards ceremony took place at the Langham Hotel in Central London today.

The Skytrax World Airline Awards are recognised throughout the world as a valued benchmarking tool that is independent, impartial and global. The survey measures passenger satisfaction among business and leisure travellers, across all cabins (First Class, Business Class, Premium Economy Class and Economy class).

Over 19 million air travellers were surveyed about their experiences with airlines on the ground and in the air over a 10-month period. The survey measured passenger satisfaction across a wide range of performance indicators of airline front-line product and service, including check-in, boarding, on-board seat comfort, cabin cleanliness, food, beverages, in-flight entertainment and staff service. The survey covered over 200 airlines, from the largest international airlines to smaller domestic carriers.

“We are of course delighted and honored to be recognised once again. This award is particularly important and valued as it has been won based on the personal choice of our customers. I would like to offer them my sincerest thanks and look forward to welcoming them on board again soon. I would also like to recognise our team of dedicated employees who go the extra mile each and every day to provide consistently outstanding service to all our passengers. We will continue to work hard and strive for even higher standards.” said Peter Foster, President and CEO of Air Astana.



Taiwan mulls visa-free entry for Filipinos in October



Taipei, Sept. 13 (CNA) Residents of the Philippines could become eligible for visa-free entry to Taiwan in October if the details of the new policy are hammered out at an upcoming meeting, a Foreign Ministry official said Wednesday.

An inter-ministerial meeting of officials from national security, police, immigration and other government agencies scheduled for later this week will discuss related issues, according to the official who asked not to named.

If details relating to the implementation of the policy are finalized during the meeting, the new visa-free entry rules could come into effect in October, the official said.

In an effort to promote the New Southbound Policy, the Foreign Ministry convened an inter-ministerial meeting on April 10 to explore the feasibility of granting visa-free entry to Taiwan for nationals from countries targeted by the policy, including the Philippines.

The New Southbound Policy aims to enhance Taiwan’s relations with countries in Southeast Asia, South Asia, Australia and New Zealand.

However, the ministry announced in a statement in May that it was postponing a plan to grant Philippine nationals visa-free entry starting this June, citing the need to “complete relevant administrative procedures and inter-agency coordination.”

The announcement came just weeks after the Foreign Ministry had said it would implement the policy by June. At that time, the ministry said it expected to make public the full details and start date of the visa-free travel plan in September.

The Taiwan government relaxed visa rules for individuals from 10 member states of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and India, effective from Aug.1, 2016 and included the Philippines in its e-visa program on Oct. 7 last year.

(By Elaine Hou and Evelyn Kao)
Enditem/AW