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THURSDAY

TAIPEI TIMES 台北時報

NT$15
16 PAGES

APRIL 11, 2019 WWW.TAIPEITIMES.COM VOLUME 20 NUMBER 301

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DPP postpones its presidential primary

A TIME FOR UNITY? DPP Chairman Cho Jung-tai urged party members to use the time to coordinate between the two sides and avoid public support for either camp

BY **YANG CHUN-HUI** AND **JASON PAN**
STAFF REPORTERS

Top Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) officials have decided to delay the start of the party's presidential primary from Friday to May 22, with the time frame for a public opinion poll to be worked out later, DPP Secretary-General Luo Wen-chia (羅文嘉) said yesterday after a meeting of the DPP Central Executive Committee.

Meanwhile, a five-member mediation panel would confer with President Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文) and her challenger, former premier William Lai (賴清德), to finalize the process to determine the DPP's candidate for next year's presidential election.

The proposal to delay the primary was raised at the meeting and passed without opposition, "so the committee members will all bear responsibility together," Luo said, adding that it would "foster unity within our party, without making changes or interrupting the primary process."

There have been serious concerns of a major crisis developing that could lead to the party splitting up, as Lai, who has insisted that there should be no change to the party's primary process, has mounted a strong challenge to Tsai for the nomination.

The panel and other key party officials have reportedly been negotiating a Tsai-Lai ticket, in which the former premier would be the vice presidential candidate.

"At the end of the meeting, DPP Chairman Cho Jung-tai (卓榮泰) called on party members to use the additional time to confer and coordinate between the two sides, not for further confrontation and fighting," Luo said. "Strong-arm tactics will not achieved the desired result of coordination."

Luo quoted Cho as saying: "We urge Tsai and Lai, our party's two presidential candidate hopefuls, to keep their supporters from feuding and not to attack each other. All party officials must take a neutral stance and should no longer make public displays of support for either camp."

Following the party's announcement, Lai issued a statement titled: "No backing down from the arbitrary; Insistence on my original conviction; and Stay in the race all the way."

He expressed regret over the delay, saying that "the committee is making changes for a second time. The move is a serious blow to the DPP and has invalidated our party's founding value of democracy."

Lai said that he disagreed with the delay, adding: "I was not consulted beforehand about this decision."

"When I entered into the presidential primary process, I intended to gather wide support from all sides and to pick up the political burden for Taiwan," he said.

"I knew at the time that there would be many difficulties ahead. Whether these come from within the party or from outside, I will face them with all my courage," Lai added.

Primaries had been a mechanism that the DPP could be proud of, Lai said.

"It is the biggest difference between us and other political parties, which only have one voice and no dissent," he said. "However, now our party regards it as a fearful beast to be avoided, or compares it to two trains on a collision course."

The primary process allows both camps to debate the party's path, and brings out competing ideas and new concepts, Lai said, adding that afterward, "we can still find common ground for unity, to work together toward a better future and together take up the political responsibility for Taiwan."

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu smiles as he addresses supporters at party headquarters in Tel Aviv yesterday. PHOTO: AFP

Netanyahu heads for fifth term as prime minister of Israel

BLOOMBERG

People call Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu "the magician."

Israeli Attorney General Avihai Mandelblit had already served notice that he plans to indict Netanyahu on multiple counts of bribery and fraud. Former Israeli armed forces chief Lieutenant General Benny Gantz, who has a reputation for integrity, had convinced many in Israel that Netanyahu had to go.

However, the scandals were not enough to sink Netanyahu's bid to become Israel's longest-serving prime minister. His nationalist base rallied to his aid, cushioning him against likely charges, and if current trends hold, he would have led Likud to one of its best showings ever in Tuesday's closely fought elections.

Gantz has yet to concede defeat, but with 98 percent of votes counted, Netanyahu's alliance with right-wing and religious parties is on track to secure 65 seats in the 120-seat parliament, or Knesset, giving him a clear path to form the next government.

"People say: I don't care if he is corrupt or not, I don't care if he took a few cigars or presents, the main thing is that, from my point of view, the economy is growing and there is security," Ariel University lecturer Erez Cohen said.

The election result could ripple across a volatile region. Peacemaking with the Palestinians has stalled under Netanyahu's watch. He opted to improve Israel's ties with Gulf Arab states by leveraging a shared distrust of Iran.

A US peace plan, which US President Donald Trump's administration says would present new solutions to break the impasse, is expected to be unveiled shortly after the election.

Just ahead of polling, Netanyahu pitched for right-wing voters who might be tempted to back other nationalist factions, suggesting that he could annex Jewish settlements in the West Bank that Palestinians want for the heartland of a future state.

Palestine Liberation Organization veteran official Hanan Ashrawi said Israelis had chosen racism and permanent conflict.

"They have chosen an overwhelmingly right-wing, xenophobic and anti-Palestinian parliament to represent them," she said. "Israelis chose to entrench and expand apartheid."

The final tally is unlikely to be announced before today, as about 200,000 votes cast by Israeli soldiers could take longer to filter through and produce some last-minute surprises.

After declaring victory early in the night, Gantz's Blue and White party watched as the numbers turned against them in a knife-edge vote. By morning, Gantz admitted that the odds were not in his favor, but issued a statement to supporters saying that the movement was only at the beginning of its journey.

Academia Sinica yesterday shared the first-ever image of a black hole taken by the Event Horizon Telescope project that connects eight telescopes across the world. PHOTO COURTESY OF ACADEMIA SINICA

Taiwanese researchers help take first black hole image

BY **LIN CHIA-NAN**
STAFF REPORTER

Academia Sinica researchers participating in the Event Horizon Telescope (EHT) project yesterday evening shared the first image of a black hole, along with scientists in five other countries.

The accomplishment — an image of the black hole at the center of the Messier 87 (M87) galaxy — is one of the century's most significant breakthroughs in physics and astronomy and Taiwan played a vital role, Academia Sinica President James Liao (廖俊智) told a news conference before the event in Taipei.

Local researchers were simultaneously sharing the discovery with researchers in Washington, Santiago, Brussels, Shanghai and Tokyo.

The image — unveiled at 9:07pm — showed a black center surrounded by a crescent of light, and the audience in Taipei expressed their amazement with a big round of applause.

The project researchers took the same image over the past seven days from their vantage point on Earth, the academy's Institute of Astronomy and Astrophysics associate research fellow Keiichi Asada said, adding that the black hole in M87 is about 55 million light years away.

"Past observation has shown that there is a supermassive black hole at the center of M87, but previous technology could not create a clear image of it until today [Wednesday]," he said.

The achievement would open a new window on the study of gravitation and astronomy, he said.

The EHT is an international project working together to capture the image of a black hole by linking eight radio telescopes around the globe, creating a virtual Earth-sized telescope.

Academia Sinica members helped installed three of the telescopes, including the Atacama Large Millimeter/Submillimeter Array, the Submillimeter Array and the James Clerk Maxwell Telescope, the institution said.

Former institute director Paul Ho (賀曾樸) went to Denmark to take part in yesterday's event, while institute researcher Chen Ming-tang (陳明堂) joined the one in Washington.

Han to give seminar, not 'speech': researcher

BY **WANG RONG-HSIANG**
STAFF REPORTER

Kaohsiung Mayor Han Kuo-yu (韓國瑜) has been invited to a closed-door seminar at Harvard University's Fairbank Center for Chinese Studies, not to give a speech as he has claimed, exiled Chinese dissident Wang Dan (王丹) said yesterday, comparing Han with a frog at the bottom of a well for exaggerating the significance of his trip to the US.

Wang, a center researcher, on Tuesday said that he could not find any information about a planned speech by Han, adding that if the center does not publish such information, it means the event does not exist.

An invitation posted by the Kaohsiung Information Bureau is for Han to attend a closed-door seminar, which is normal at the center, but the mayor and his staff have insisted on calling it a speech, Wang said.

A Facebook group opposed to the Chinese National Party (KMT) also emphasized the closed-door nature of the invitation, saying that Han was "one of a kind."

Netizens commented on the post that Han and his fans are shameless for exaggerating the significance of his ongoing visit to the US.

Others said that Han's fans should pay for the 10-day trip, which began on Tuesday and is to cost NT$3 million (US$97,260).

Han said that Wang should spend more time monitoring North Korean leader Kim Jong-un than minding Taiwanese affairs.

Han said: "We are glad to represent Kaohsiung in accepting the invitation from the Fairbank Center."

"We will introduce Kaohsiung and conduct as many exchanges as possible," he said. "We will make as many friends as we can."

"The professors at the Fairbank Center have shown a keen interest in learning about the mayoral election in Kaohsiung, and we gladly accepted their invitation," Han said.

"The trip to Harvard was set up before last month, so it is unnecessary to associate it with any other possible reasons for a visit," he said, referring to speculation that he is using the occasion to further a potential bid for next year's presidential election.

Han compared his US trip to "a lion trying to catch a rabbit," saying that it would require his full concentration, because he is introducing Kaohsiung and Taiwan to academics at the center.

Kaohsiung Information Bureau Director-General Anne Wang yesterday explains Kaohsiung Mayor Han Kuo-yu's US itinerary. PHOTO: WANG JUNG-HSIANG, TAIPEI TIMES

US' Paul Ryan to head anniversary delegation: AIT

TAIWAN RELATIONS ACT: The US delegation will attend the opening of the American Institute in Taiwan's new location and the Women's Economic Empowerment Summit

BY **LU YI-HSUAN** AND **SHERRY HSIAO**
STAFF REPORTER, WITH STAFF WRITER

Former US House of Representatives speaker Paul Ryan is to head a delegation to Taiwan in celebration of the 40th anniversary of the signing of the Taiwan Relations Act (TRA), the American Institute in Taiwan (AIT) announced yesterday.

The delegation is to participate in a series of events, including a ceremony at the AIT's new office compound in Taipei's Neihu District (內湖) on Monday next week and the Women's Economic Empowerment Summit at Taipei's Songshan Cultural and Creative Park (松山文創園區) on Tuesday, the AIT said in a statement.

The Central News Agency reported that Ryan would be a speaker at Monday's ceremony and reception at the AIT's new location, citing an anonymous source familiar with the matter.

The TRA was signed into law by then-US president Jimmy Carter on April 10, 1979, the same year that the AIT was established.

The news comes after the US House of Representatives' Foreign Affairs Committee on Tuesday unanimously voted for two bills — House Resolution 273 (HR 274; Reaffirming the United States commitment to Taiwan and to the implementation of the Taiwan Relations Act) and House Resolution 2002 (HR 2002; Taiwan Assurance Act of 2019) — to be sent to the House floor for consideration.

"Taiwan is strong democratically and is increasingly under threat from communist China," US Representative and committee leader Michael McCaul said.

HR 2002 "reaffirms our support for Taiwan's defense capabilities and advocates for their participation in international organizations," said McCaul, who introduced the bill.

"As we celebrate the 40th anniversary of the Taiwan Relations Act, it is important for our friend Taiwan to know that our alliance will only grow stronger," he added.

The committee shared on Facebook a GIF of the 14 resolutions that were considered at Tuesday's session: HR 2002 was listed beside a Republic of China national flag, while HR 273 was listed beside a logo that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs designed in honor of the TRA's 40th anniversary.

Former US House of Representatives speaker Paul Ryan smiles in an official portrait. PHOTO COURTESY OF CONGRESSIONAL PICTORIAL DIRECTORY

The ministry called the committee's approval of the resolutions on the eve of the 40th anniversary of the enactment of the TRA "significant."

The ministry would closely follow any future legislation favorable to Taiwan, it said.

The Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office in the US said on Facebook that it sincerely thanks the US Congress for its support of long-term, deeper Taiwan-US relations, as well as Taiwan's efforts to protect its sovereignty, the values of democracy and freedom, and safety in the Taiwan Strait.

HR 273 says that the TRA and the "six assurances" — proposed by Taiwan and issued in 1982 by the administration of then-US president Ronald Reagan — are "cornerstones of United States policy with respect to Taiwan."

The resolution also says that "communication on bilateral security, cultural and commercial interests would be greatly enhanced with the full implementation of the Taiwan Travel Act," which was passed last year.

The US president should "conduct regular transfers of defense articles to Taiwan consistent with Taiwan's national security requirements in accordance to prior legislation, including the Asia Reassurance Initiative Act of 2018," it says.

The resolution also calls on the US secretary of state to "actively engage internationally in support of Taiwan's meaningful participation in international organizations engaged in addressing transnational threats and challenges such as those related to health, aviation security, and crime and terrorism."

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TAIEX 10,868.14 (up 0.15%) Turnover: NT$128.465 billion

TPEX 142.81 (up 0.01%) Turnover: NT$37.466 billion

NT$ AGAINST US$ 30.845 down NT$0.04 Turnover: US$633 million

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