



# Taiwan Newsletter

## Headline News

### Taiwan urges China to free Nobel Peace Prize winner

On 27 June, Taiwan's Mainland Affairs Council (MAC) urged China to free 2010 Nobel Peace Prize winner Liu Xiao-bo, following reports Liu is on medical parole for treatment of late-stage liver cancer. Liu was jailed on charges of masterminding the 1989 Tiananmen Square protests and was imprisoned again in 2009 for his role in drafting the "2008 Constitution." The MAC also urged Beijing to release Lee Ming-che, a human rights activist from Taiwan, who has been detained in China since March, on charges of pursuing activities harmful to China's national security, but those charges have since been upgraded to "subverting state power." China has so far refused Lee's wife's requests to visit him.



On 18 May, Lee's wife, Lee Ching-yu, attended a hearing of the subcommittee on global human rights of the US House of Representatives, to plead for Washington to help secure the release of her husband. She praised the US for having long been the protector of justice, freedom and democracy everywhere, including Taiwan. Mid-June, the Congressional Executive Commission on China (CECC) added Lee to its database of political prisoners. The CECC notified Lee's wife and said it will officially launch efforts to secure his release. It also stated that Lee's name would be added to a list of priority political prisoners that the US congress may submit to President Trump prior to his next official visit to China.

## International News

### President Tsai welcomes first US arms deal under Trump

On 30 June, President Tsai Ing-wen welcomed news of the United States' first arms deal with the island under the Trump administration. President Tsai lauded the weapons package worth nearly \$1.4 billion in the face of increased tensions with Beijing after her election. "The provision of these systems will help strengthen Taiwan's self-defense capabilities," Tsai said. "This increases Taiwan's confidence and ability to maintain the status quo of peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait. On this basis, we will continue to seek constructive dialogue with Beijing, while promoting positive developments in cross-Strait relations. We believe that such efforts will be welcomed by the international community." A US official was quoted as saying that the arms deal was "consistent with the Taiwan Relations Act, and our support for Taiwan's ability to maintain a sufficient self-defense capability."



## Cultural News

### President Tsai vows to strengthen soft power, expand cultural exchanges

During an event of the General Association of Chinese Culture on 1 July, President Tsai Ing-wen said that her government is committed to strengthening Taiwan's soft power and expanding cultural exchanges with other nations. Since taking over as head of the nonprofit GACC in March, Tsai said the Taipei-based

organization has played a key role in promoting local culture abroad. It has taken the lead in a number of important projects such as launching the 2017 Art Truck Shows, involving one of Taiwan's signature stage trucks replete with four groups of Taiwan performing artists and singers touring South-East Asia. Another project is a series of shorts documenting the unique talents and skills of local artisans. One film per month will be released online beginning in August, with the goal of raising international awareness of Taiwan's distinctive crafts and time-honored production techniques.



## Miscellaneous News

### Taiwan International Balloon Festival kicks off

On 1 July, the annual Taiwan International Balloon Festival kicked off on the mountain plains around Taitung, with thousands of tourists at the site to witness the spectacle. In its 6<sup>th</sup> year, the festival opened with 20 hot air balloons ascending into the sky, as elders from the indigenous Amis tribe prayed for good fortune for the event, which will run till 6 August. A total of 35 hot air balloons from all over the world are taking part in the festival, including 12 European ones, a record high. The balloons are divided into 3 themes featuring famous pop culture characters, animals and cartoon characters.

