

TOP NEWS

Taiwan bid at WHO firmly denounced

Proposal submitted by countries that aim to 'seriously disrupt' assembly

By WANG QINGYUN
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China is firmly opposed to the proposal submitted to the World Health Organization of "inviting Taiwan to participate as an observer" at this year's World Health Assembly, a Foreign Ministry spokesman said on Thursday.

The issue of Taiwan's participation in the assembly must be handled according to the one-China principle, spokesman Zhao Ijian said at a daily news conference. The assembly is the WHO's top decision-making body.

According to the consensus reached by the WHO Executive Board, this year's assembly, to be held on Monday and Tuesday, will discuss only necessary issues such as COVID-19 and the election of board members, Zhao said.

"This shows that a majority of the WHO members hope to focus on international cooperation to tackle the pandemic at this assembly," he said.

The international community, including China, firmly objects to individual countries' insistence on discussing the proposal, which was submitted by countries including Eswatini (formerly known as Swaziland) and Nicaragua, Zhao said.

They insist on doing so "only to seriously disrupt the process of the assembly and undermine international cooperation to fight the pandemic," the spokesman said.

China's central government has made proper arrangements for the Taiwan region to take part in global health issues, and made sure that the region can deal with public health emergencies in a timely and effective manner, Zhao said.

Taiwan attended the annual World Health Assembly as an

observer from 2009 to 2016.

Zhao said no legal, legitimate basis is found in the WHO Constitution or the WHA Rules of Procedure for a region of a sovereign state to join the assembly as an observer. He said the island's attendance was a result of a special arrangement by China's central government.

The arrangement was made after consultations across the Taiwan Straits and based on both sides across the Straits adhering to the 1992 Consensus, which embodies the one-China principle, Zhao said.

None of the WHO's member states disagreed with that arrangement, and the organization's then director-general invited the island to take part in the assembly as an observer, Zhao said, adding that such invitations did not constitute a precedent.

Since taking office, Taiwan's Democratic Progressive Party has been sticking stubbornly to a "Taiwan independence" position, refusing to recognize that both sides across the Straits belong to one China, thus leading to the disappearance of the political basis for the island to take part in the World Health Assembly, he said.

"The basis was abandoned unilaterally by the Democratic Progressive Party's failure to attend the assembly (as an observer) was caused by the Democratic Progressive Party's authorities," the spokesman said.

"There is only one China in the world. The Taiwan region is an inseparable part of China's territory," Zhao said.

The one-China principle is a common aspiration in the international community, and the WHO should stick strictly to the principle when dealing with Taiwan-related issues, he said.



Gathering winter bounty

Farmworkers harvest wheat on Wednesday in the village of Wushi in Guizhou province's Sinan county. About 987 hectares of winter wheat were planted this year in the county.

YANG WENBIN / XINHUA



Two Sessions

Editor's note: As this year's sessions of the National People's Congress and the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference prepare to open next week, China Daily will publish a series of stories focusing on the achievements that have been made and major issues expected to be discussed at the two sessions.

Agricultural economy key in poverty fight

By LI LEI in Beijing
and YANG JUN in Guiyang

A lawmaker wants to see sales platforms linking farmers with consumers built in rural areas to boost agricultural revenues.

A political adviser is proposing more benefits for grassroots agricultural technicians to encourage young talent to enter the field.

With China less than eight months away from its deadline for ending domestic poverty, politicians are targeting rural affairs and poverty issues in their proposals for the two sessions — the annual gatherings of the National People's Congress, the top legislature, and the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, the top advisory body — which are set to open in Beijing next week.

The events are customarily held in March, but were postponed this year due to the novel coronavirus pandemic.

Poverty relief has been one of the most discussed topics in the political arena since late 2012, when China ramped up efforts to stamp out absolute poverty by the end of 2020.

The topic is expected to draw even more public attention this year, as

top officials have reiterated the central government's determination to reach its zero-poverty goal on schedule despite COVID-19.

The novel coronavirus outbreak triggered widespread travel bans and production stoppages this year, leaving many migrant workers — the major breadwinners in many impoverished households — temporarily without any income.

It has also led to poor sales of farm produce because of disrupted logistical chains and flagging consumer demand, highlighting growers' vulnerability in times of crisis.

Zhang Jindong, a legislator from Jiangsu province and chairman of Suning.com, an e-commerce retailer, said Chinese farmers have long grappled with information asymmetries, which has led to a lack of

distribution channels and taken a toll on rural incomes.

"There are limited channels for farm produce and rural specialties to reach the consumer market," he said, adding that was partly because the aging rural population struggles to navigate in the e-commerce arena.

To address the woes, Zhang proposed that village authorities build platforms to help connect local farmers with consumers using e-commerce and modern logistics services.

He also suggested that the authorities roll out tax breaks, funding support and other favorable policies to attract entrepreneurial young people back to the countryside to facilitate the task.

Another problem facing farmers

is the lack of technological support, which is crucial to boosting agricultural productivity and rural revenues and ensuring national food security.

Huang Zonghong, a political adviser from Guizhou province, a major battleground in the fight against rural poverty in southwestern China, said few people were willing to work as agricultural technicians in the countryside due to low salaries and the lack of chances for promotion.

"The trend is worth noting, as it bodes ill for agricultural modernization," said Huang, also the deputy head of the Guizhou Academy of Agricultural Sciences and chairman of the Guizhou branch of the Jiu San Society, one of eight China's non-Communist parties.

Huang suggested better pay and more training opportunities for agricultural technicians in rural areas and the creation of channels for promotion in an effort to retain talent.

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FDI: Execs express confidence in market

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Thomas Brenner, general manager of the Smart Infrastructure unit at Siemens China, said as China is accelerating the development of new infrastructure, the integration of these facilities with artificial intelligence, the internet of things and other advanced technologies will greatly drive the transformation and upgrading of the electricity grid, buildings,

mobility and other sectors in its cities.

Peter Tyroller, member of the board of management of Robert Bosch GmbH responsible for the Asia-Pacific region, said that although the outbreak has had a significant impact on the global economy and companies, the German company remains convinced about the potential of the Chinese market.

As Bosch has invested 48.5 billion yuan in China's manufacturing and

innovation sectors over the past decade, he said the company will make every effort to ensure sustained and stable supplies to meet increasing demand from the Chinese market as the company seeks to tap into development opportunities and spur its future growth in the world's second-largest economy.

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Vaccine: Phase-one trial to end in December

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"This vaccine candidate holds great promise. Until such time as there is an effective vaccine for COVID-19, the virus will continue to disrupt all aspects of our society and economy," said Iain Stewart, president of the NRC.

The relationship between the NRC and CanSinoBIO was established in 2013. The NRC's HEK293 cell line was later licensed to CanSinoBIO and used in the development of an approved vaccine against the Ebola virus.

Yu Xuefeng, CEO of CanSinoBIO, said it was "perfect timing" to leverage cutting-edge technology and resources from both nations that are critical to the development of Ad5-nCoV.

"We are in this global public health emergency together, and a collaborative engagement could be the shortcut to help win this race against the novel coronavirus," said Yu.

The statement said that the new COVID-19 vaccine is also produced using HEK293 cell lines that were designed and developed at the NRC.

By bringing their technologies and expertise together to fight COVID-19, CanSinoBIO and the NRC are aiming



Iain Stewart

to "pave the way" for future clinical trials in Canada, in collaboration with the Canadian Immunization Research Network at the Canadian Centre for Vaccinology.

The vaccine is subject to approval by Health Canada, the national health department, for which CanSinoBIO is in the process of filing a clinical trial application.

The first- and second-phase human trials have already started in China. China's Science and Technology Daily said that the first-phase studies for Ad5-nCoV began in March, with 108 people taking three different doses.

In an unusual step, CanSinoBIO began second-phase testing in early April with 500 people, even though the first phase will not be completed until December. A third phase could involve a far larger number of people, perhaps as many as 10,000.

Lakshmi Krishnan, director-general of the NRC's Human Health Therapeutics Research Centre, said the trials in Canada will complement and expand on what has been done in China.

"We're bringing back home a Canadian technology, and we're able to have the most advanced vaccine candidate in the world potentially available for Canadians in short order," Krishnan told CBC News.

She said a phase-one trial for the Ebola vaccine took place at the Canadian Centre for Vaccinology in Halifax. The first coronavirus vaccine also will be tested on healthy human volunteers there.

If successful, the phase-two trials could start in the fall, with a vaccine available for noncommercial use for front-line workers and those at risk in late 2020 or early 2021.

The collaboration announced on Tuesday will allow the NRC to advance a scaled-up production process for the vaccine candidate, using its proprietary HEK293 cell line.

As a preparatory step, the Canadian government has already announced CA\$44 million (\$31.1 million) in funding to support upgrades to the NRC's facilities in Montreal to enable compliance with good manufacturing practice standards, to ensure readiness for Canadian bioprocessing of potential vaccine candidates as they become available.



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