



Photo by Theerasak Saksrinavee



## President Tsai returns from Central America, touts steadfast diplomacy

President Tsai Ing-wen returned January 15 to Taiwan from an official visit to Republic of China (Taiwan) diplomatic allies Honduras, Nicaragua, Guatemala and El Salvador in that order, describing the nine-day trip as instrumental in cementing bilateral ties with the Central American nations while demonstrating the effectiveness of the government's steadfast diplomacy approach.



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According to the president, the approach takes into account industry and related developments within the framework of changing global conditions. Given the enormous potential of Central America, the region is certain to feature prominently in the business strategies of Taiwan firms, she said, adding that the gov-

ernment will help open the market by building on its free trade agreements with El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua, as well as organizing more fact-finding trips involving the public and private sectors. At a breakfast January 13 in El Salvador with Taiwanese reporters, Tsai also stressed that her administration will continue to provide assistance in infrastructure and public health to its allies and will also seek a feasible commercial model of cooperation on infrastructure projects. In response to questions on concerns that Taiwan might become a bargaining chip in the relationship between the United States and China, Tsai said in terms of national strength, "we are not a small country," adding that the country has the ability to deal with international relations, and will always put Taiwan's interests first.

Prior to returning to Taiwan, Tsai stopped over January 13 for one night in San Francisco. She also made a transit stop in Houston January 7 en route to Central America. This is the president's second overseas trip since taking office May 20, 2016. In June, she attended the inauguration ceremony of the Panama Canal expansion project before traveling to ROC South American diplomatic ally Paraguay.

Source: Taiwan Today, Office of the President, Photo: Office of the President



## **ITRI demonstrates 2 cutting-edge technologies at CES 2017**

The Industrial Technology Research Institute (ITRI), Taiwan's leading high-tech applied research institution, demonstrates 2 cutting-edge technologies at CES 2017, a global consumer electronics and consumer technology trade show held January 5-8 in Las Vegas, the United States, according to a statement issued by the ITRI.



In the four-day international fair, the institute demonstrates a robot equipped with ITRI's Intelligent Vision System that is able to play chess with attendees and fill coffee at various fill levels while the coffee cup is at random locations, it said, adding that the institute also presents an ICT solution for drones that can remotely control LTE-connected drones for fleet management.

The Intelligent Vision System enables robots and other machines to interpret the visual world, act on visual information, learn from experience, and can be applied to con-

sumer and industrial requirements, it noted. "The robot is able to distinguish between various chess pieces and their locations; and between various coffee cups," the ITRI said.

The ICT Solution for Drones delivers world-leading ability to control more than one LTE-connected drone from one fleet management system. It integrates the operation of multiple drones and unlimited range even across continents via LTE, the ITRI said. Its potential applications include aerial photography, security patrol, solar panel, wind turbine, and power line inspection, landslide inspection, and transport, it said.

"ITRI's Intelligent Vision System has many potential applications for companion robots that can assist seniors, families and individuals, while our ICT Solution for Drones is a promising drone fleet management system, which can operate across continents and off-grid for extended periods," said Kao Ming-jeer, deputy director general of ITRI's Electronic and Optoelectronic System Research Laboratories.

*Source: Focus Taiwan, Photo: itri.org.tw*

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## **Taiwan passes law to liberalize green energy supply**

Taiwan's Legislature passed an amendment to the Electricity Act on January 11, allowing for the supply of green energy directly to consumers and the restructuring of the state-owned Taiwan Power Company (Taipower).

The new law changes the regulation that permitted green energy suppliers to sell electricity only to Taipower and is expected to spur more rapid development of the

sector, which currently produces only 4 percent of the electricity generated in Taiwan. Other suppliers of conventional power will also be allowed to sell electricity direct-

*Source: Focus Taiwan*



ly to consumers, ending Taipower's 70 years of monopoly, according to the amended law.

It also allows for Taipower's operations to be split into two sectors, one for power generation and the other for electricity trans-

mission, distribution and sale. The amended act also stipulates that all nuclear power facilities will stop operation by 2025, paving the way for the government's "nuclear power-free homeland."

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## AMERICAN PRIEST GETS ROC ID AFTER 54 YEARS

American Catholic priest Brendan O'Connell finally obtained a Republic of China (Taiwan) identification card January 6 after living and serving in Taiwan for more than half a century.

"I've waited for this ID for 54 years," the 81-year-old said upon receiving the card from Premier Lin Chuan, who visited him at the Bethlehem Foundation in Tainan to present the ID to him.

O'Connell said he has always seen himself as a Taiwanese and that he loves Taiwan because the Taiwanese people love him.

Now that he has obtained an ROC ID, the priest said he hopes he can live until 100.

O'Connell is the first person to be naturalized as an ROC citizen without hav-

ing to renounce his original citizenship, which became possible after an amendment to the Nationality Act was passed last month.

O'Connell was born in 1936 in the United States and was dispatched by the Catholic Maryknoll Fathers to Taiwan in 1963, when he was 27.

In 1988, he established the St. Theresa Opportunity Center in Tainan, which provides day care services for children and adults with mental or physical disabilities.

In 1996, he set up the Bethlehem Foundation, which mainly serves children with developmental delays under the age of six.

Although he was granted permanent resident status in Taiwan in 2011, O'Connell hoped to obtain an ID card while retaining his US citizenship.

His dream

finally came true when the Legislative Yuan passed an amendment to the Nationality Act in December 2016 to allow foreign nationals with special contributions to the country to obtain ROC nationality without renouncing their original citizenships.



Source: Focus Taiwan, Photo: The Executive Yuan





# The Golden Age of Taiwanese Tea Exports

*Taiwan Panorama*

*By Cathy Teng*

*Photos by Jimmy Lin and Chuang Kung-ju*

Taiwanese tea enjoyed a star turn in the late 19th and early 20th centuries with domestic tea merchants and foreign traders exporting it around the globe. “Formosa Oolong Tea” was the first of Taiwan’s teas to claim international recognition, but others soon followed. Britain’s Queen Victoria was so taken with the unique flavor of a particular Taiwanese oolong tea that she named it “Oriental Beauty.” Nearer to home, for a time black tea grown in Guanxi Township was selected for the use of the Japanese imperial household.



*Local tea farmers, processors and retailers work tirelessly to bring the Taiwanese people their beloved beverage. (Chuang Kung-ju)*

Taiwan’s tea industry was one of the island’s early export sectors and an important source of foreign exchange earnings. It helped Taipei flourish, and was integral to the northward migration of Taiwanese

business. The more than 200 tea merchants based in Taipei’s Dadaocheng area during the industry’s most prosperous period were a potent force driving Taiwan’s booming tea exports.



## Dadaocheng's century of tea

Though no longer in business, the Sin Hong Choon Trade Company was once one of Taipei's largest tea merchants and occupied three adjacent three-story buildings along Taipei's Minsheng West Road. Its founder, Wang Lian-he, immigrated to Taiwan from Fujian Province with his father Wang Fang-qun at the age of 16. Wang and his father bought and processed raw tea leaves before reselling them to Southeast Asia. The Wang family bought land and built Sin Hong Choon's facilities in 1934. Those facilities became a waystation for tea-industry workers and entrepreneurs who had just immigrated to Taiwan to make their fortunes, a place they could enjoy a meal and a break before leaping back into the fray.



*Wang Tea's roasting bins have seen hard use over the years. (Jimmy Lin) their beloved beverage. (Chuang Kung-ju)*

Wang Tea founder Wang Jing-hui was also Fujianese. One of many natives of Anxi, the home of tieguanyin tea, to relocate to Taiwan during Taiwanese tea's export heyday, he opened Wang Tea in Dadaocheng in 1890. Now run by his fifth-generation descendant, Jason Wang, Wang Tea is still in business today. The Luo family pooled its resources to

found the "Formosa Black Tea Company" in 1937, to address a problem particular to Hsinchu's Guanxi Township. The township had a long history of making tea, but its farmers struggled to profit from their labors because the area lacked its own export channels. The Formosa

Black Tea Company integrated Guanxi's tea-leaf production, then arranged to export leaves directly to buyers in the United States and Europe.



*The Formosa Tea Industry and Culture Gallery is a converted warehouse that now displays many precious historical photos. (Jimmy Lin)*





## Producing fine teas

In the old days, tea merchants purchased raw tea leaves, then processed them prior to export. This processing involved a number of steps, from grading, stemming, and roasting, to blending, winnowing, and packaging.

Tea experts and merchants sampled and tasted the tea leaves purchased from each growing area, then graded them based on their shape, scent, and flavor. Wang Guozhong says: “The evaluation process was taken very seriously. Only a few people were allowed near the tasting table.”

The next step was “stemming,” which involved removing stems and other unwanted debris from the raw leaves. After that came “roasting,” which reduced the water content, aided preservation, and created a sweeter-tasting beverage when the leaves were ultimately brewed. It was a fine art, in which a master roaster’s control over the time and temperature of the roast was critical to the tea’s flavor.

Anxi tea makers began their traditional roasting process by packing their ovens with roughly 60 kilograms of charcoal, which was broken into small chunks to minimize the space between pieces. They then placed a layer of previously cooked rice husks on top of the charcoal, and set the charcoal alight. The husks and charcoal were burned down to ash, which helped moderate the temperature of the roast, and then the tea leaves were packed into the bins, placed on top of the ash, and turned every three hours to ensure that they cooked evenly. This roasting process was integral to the development of the tea’s flavor.

During “blending,” master tea makers applied their skills and senses to eliminating the peculiarities of individual batches of tea leaves, mixing them to match the tea merchant’s own flavor profiles. Jason Wang says this was necessary because Taiwanese tea growers had small plantations, and merchants were unable to source their leaves from a single grower. Merchants also used the roasting and blending processes to create their own signature flavor.

The merchants’ ability to produce tea of consistent quality helped usher in a golden age of Taiwanese tea exports.

## A golden age

In the late 18th century, mainland Chinese mer-

chants dominated the Southeast-Asian export market for paochong tea. In an effort to claim some of that market for his company, Jason Wang’s grandfather Wang Chengqing, the third-generation head of Wang Tea, processed tea leaves in Taiwan, then sold them to his own father, Wang Xiao-jin, in Thailand, where Xiao-jin was attempting to develop the local market.

Sin Hong Choon utilized a similar model, with Wang Lian-he handling the family’s business in Thailand when he was in his 20s. When his father, Wang Fang-qun, came across a particularly good batch of tea, he roasted it and sent it to Lian-he to sell. The tea was of such good quality that Lian-he was able to negotiate an exclusive deal with Thailand’s largest tea merchant, and begin the spread of Taiwanese paochong tea through Thailand.

Luo Ching-shih, the elegant and aristocratic-looking managing director of the Formosa Black Tea Company, said “We may be a small company, but we’ve exported to 85 ports. And that’s just our company, not all of Taiwan’s tea merchants.” Luo showed us a wall of with hundreds of metal stencils, explaining that these are used to print the company’s export information onto the sides of the wooden crates in which it shipped its tea.



*“Formosa Tea” was Taiwan’s first internationally recognized brand. (Jimmy Lin)*



Three of the stencils on the wall highlight the changes to Taiwan's international status over the years: "Republic of China," "Taiwan Free China," and, in Chinese, "Made in Taiwan, ROC." After Taiwan withdrew from the United Nations, the company could no longer print "ROC" on exports destined for nations with which Taiwan did not have formal diplomatic relations.

### New ideas

But the heyday of the international tea trade eventually came to an end. Changes to the business climate and to Taiwan's own tea industry, together with the government's 1982 withdrawal of its regulations governing tea manufacturers, led to small farmers processing their tea leaves themselves. When the tea merchants went into decline, the golden age of Taiwanese tea ended.

Wang Tea saw the writing on the wall. It opened its first retail outlet in Taipei in 1976 and began a transition from exports to domestic sales. "My father personally drove a small delivery van to markets to sell our tea. He ran it like a modern-day coffee truck," says Jason Wang. Wang Tea's efforts happened to coincide with the rise of Taiwan's economy and tea's emergence as an everyday beverage, enabling the company to establish a solid footing in the new market. The Formosa Black Tea

Company responded to the changes differently. Recognizing that the company's black tea production was no longer competitive with that of major international manufacturers, Luo shifted its focus to Japan in the 1970s. He imported Japanese sencha processing techniques and equipment, and began selling tea there. Luo also developed his own process for making green tea powder, which contains catechin, a powerful antioxidant, and is marketed as a health drink.

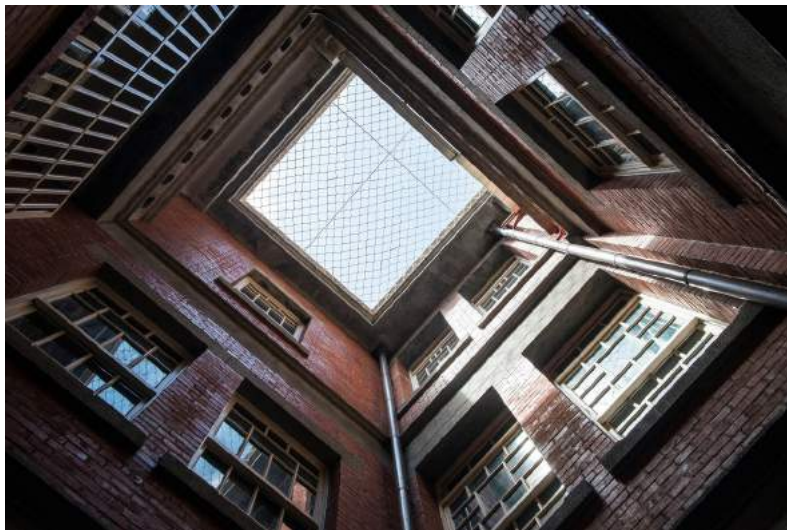
Formosa Black Tea recently rebuilt its old factory and converted some of its floor space into the Formosa Tea Industry and Culture Gallery and housed precious portions of the factory's 80-year history there.

Sin Hong Choon was less fortunate and closed in 2004.

After designating Sin Hong Choon's facilities a historic site in 2009, the Taipei City Government used a transfer of development

rights to preserve its main building.

Four years of renovation work transformed the Sin Hong Choon building back into the gorgeous and frequently visited hotspot it had once been. The city government commemorated its reopening with a special Sin Hong Choon exhibition on the first floor that recaptured Dadaocheng's glory days and enabled visitors to experience the old company's magnificence for themselves.



*The interior of the Sin Hong Choon building includes an atrium that lets in light and air. (Chuang Kung-ju)*



## Taiwanese tea exhibition in Szolnok

The Taipei Representative Office is pleased to announce that the Damjanich János Museum in Szolnok, Hungary, in cooperation with this office, Taiwan's Yingge Ceramics Museum, Library and Information Centre of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Ferenc Hopp Museum of Asiatic Arts, Hungarian Museum of Trade and Tourism and Hungarian Geographical Museum, will be hosting a Taiwanese tea culture exhibition titled "Formosa's golden treasure: Taiwan through a cup of tea" from January 27 to April 28.

The exhibition features, among other things, tea sets from the Yingge Ceramics Museum, artifacts from Hungarian institutions, displays of different types of tea, a video presentation about tea culture and the tea ceremony in Taiwan, and information about the introduction of tea to Hungary.

Museum goers are promised a journey through the history and the making of tea, an essential beverage for most Taiwanese people.

In the early 18th century, immigrants from mainland China's Fujian province brought *Camellia sinensis*, the plant species used to produce tea, to Taiwan.

Over the hundreds of years since, unique local cultivars have been bred that are more resistant to disease, faster growing and better tasting. The country's excellent natural conditions and the highly standardized process of tea manufacturing have helped

ensure the quality of tea products. With a size one-third of Hungary, Taiwan cultivates numerous types of specially flavored teas, which play an important role in its society, economy and culture.

The opening ceremony will be held at 16:30 on January 27 at the first-floor exhibition room at Damjanich János Museum. Dr. Chiang Shuling from the Yingge Ceramics Museum will conduct a Taiwanese tea ceremony

at the opening, and will host a tea workshop at 15:00 on January 28.

For more information, please visit the museum's website.

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Source: Taipei Representative Office in Hungary

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