



CONSTITUTIONAL COURT RULES IN FAVOR OF SAME-SEX MARRIAGE

Taiwan's Constitutional Court stated in a landmark ruling on May 24 that the section of the Civil Code that does not allow same-sex marriage is unconstitutional and it asked the Legislature to amend the relevant laws within two years to ensure the rights of gay couples.

The court issued the ruling in Interpretation No. 748 in response to petitions by citizen Chi Chia-wei and the Taipei City government regarding the constitutionality of same-sex marriage. The landmark ruling makes Taiwan the first country in Asia to effectively legalize same-sex marriage.

The court said the Civil Code provisions that do not allow marriage between two persons of the same sex "are in violation of both the people's free-

dom of marriage as protected by Article 22 and the people's right to equality as guaranteed by Article 7 of the Constitution." "The authorities concerned shall amend or enact relevant laws, in accordance with the ruling of this Interpretation, within two years from the issuance of this Interpretation," the court stated. "It is within the discretion of the authorities concerned to determine the formality for achieving the equal protection of the



freedom of marriage." If relevant laws are not amended or enacted within two years, same-sex couples will be allowed to marry, using the same process laid out in the Marriage Chapter of the Civil Code, the court said. At a press conference after the ruling was announced, Presidential Office Secretary-General Joseph Wu said the Presidential Office believes that the law should protect the equal right to marriage for everyone and that the ruling is binding on all Taiwanese nationals and all levels of government.

He urged the executive branch of the government to quickly propose relevant legislation and send it to the Legislature in accordance with the Constitutional Court's ruling. Wu also said President Tsai Ing-wen is calling on the public to show understanding, tolerance and respect for diverse opinions in the society.

"Regardless of what everyone's position is on the issue of same-sex marriage, this is the moment for us to treat everyone around us as our own brothers and sisters," Tsai later wrote on her Facebook page.

The landmark ruling was hailed by many gay rights groups and advocates of same-sex marriage, while anti-gay marriage groups protested.

Some laws may change as the society changes, but marriage laws should not be one of them because family structures could be harmed if it is left up to just anyone to define marriage, said Yu Hsin-yi, convener of the Happiness of the Next Generation Alliance.

"Taiwan does not have to be the first

country in Asia to legalize same-sex marriage," Yu said. Meanwhile, supporters of same-sex marriage and gay rights advocates, including the petitioner Chi, celebrated the court's interpretation.

"I feel like I've become a bird because I am leaping with joy," Chi said.

He lauded the dedicated efforts of different groups within the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender community and called on gay marriage supporters to keep the lines of communication open with opponents of same-sex marriage. Victoria Hsu, president of the Taiwan Alliance to Promote Civil Partnership Rights, said the ruling was a victory for not only Chi, but for all gay people. It is a victory even for opponents of gay marriage because their descendants will enjoy equal marriage rights regardless of their sexual orientation, Hsu said.

"The courage of the grand justices is an important driving force in the marriage equality movement," she said.

The Constitutional Court held a hearing on the issue on March 24, allowing supporters and opponents of marriage equality to debate whether the Civil Code chapter on marriage permitted same-sex marriage and if not, whether it violated the Constitution.

Article 972 of the Civil Code states that an agreement to marry "shall be made by the male and the female parties of their own accord."

Even as the Constitutional Court was examining the issue, same-sex marriage legislation was working its way through the Legislative Yuan and is now awaiting the second reading.



Defense autonomy shows Taiwan's resolve to defend itself: president

President Tsai Ing-wen said May 25 that building advanced jet trainers and submarines domestically are part of Taiwan's efforts toward defense autonomy that demonstrate the country's determination to defend itself.



Since her government was inaugurated last year, it has listed military reform as well as enhancement of military morale and dignity as a top priority, Tsai said after observing a live-fire drill held on the outlying islands of Penghu as part of the annual Han Kuang military exercises. So far, the Ministry of National Defense has established projects to replace ageing weapons and refurbish old military buildings to improve the work environment and dignity of military personnel, and to pave the way for Taiwan's defense autonomy, Tsai said.

Investing in the defense industry can also create domestic demand, spur Taiwan's technological development, and increase job opportunities, she said. Most impor-

tantly, by demonstrating its determination to move toward defense autonomy, Taiwan is showing the world its resolve to defend its own territory, according to the president. The live-fire drills of the 33rd Han Kuang exercises were held from May 22 to 26 and involve all three branches of the military – Army, Navy and Air Force – to test their coordinated response to simulated assaults by China's People's Liberation Army (PLA).

More than 3,900 troops took part in the drill, which featured 17 kinds of weaponry, including AH-64E Apache attack helicopters, UH-60M Black Hawk utility helicopters, the Thunderbolt-2000 multiple launch rocket system, M60A3 Patton main battle tanks and F-16 fighters.

Source: Focus Taiwan, Photo: Courtesy of the Office of the President



ITRI develops world's first portable pesticide detector



The **Industrial Technology Research Institute (ITRI)** has developed a device that it said can detect the level of pesticides on fruits and vegetables as they are being washed, and it hopes the device can hit the market next year.

Chu Chun-hsun, director of the ITRI's Smart Microsystems Technology Center, described the new device as the world's first handheld pesticide detector in a project supported by the Ministry of Economic Affairs. The center is now discussing a transfer of the technology to companies and hopes it can be available commercially sometime next year. The center estimated the device will cost between US\$100 and US\$150. Chu said the inspiration for the device came from optical detection methods commonly used in biomedical research, and researchers decided to see what happened if the process was applied to food. Relying on the unique wavelength absorption pattern of different chemicals, the device performs spectral analysis to get the water soluble chemicals to "re-

veal themselves," Chu explained. An ITRI staffer displayed how the device, which weighs about 200 grams, is used, putting it in a bowl of water with the vegetables to be tested and waiting for the light on the wireless charger to either flash green, yellow or red.

The light, which indicates whether there are pesticides present and at what level, gives a result in a matter of seconds.

If the light on the device is red, it means the pesticide level is much higher than the standard allowed, indicating that the vegetables need to be cleaned better.

A yellow light means a slightly higher amount of pesticide than the maximum amount allowed, and a green light signals that no pesticides or only a minimal amount are present.

Source: Focus Taiwan, Photo: Courtesy of Industrial Technology Research Institute

Taiwan's April export orders up for 9th consecutive month

On the back of solid global demand for electronic devices, Taiwan's export orders for April grew from a year earlier, marking the ninth consecutive month of increase, the Ministry of Economic Affairs (MOEA) said Monday.

In April, export orders received by Taiwanese firms totaled US\$35.61 billion, up 7.4 percent from a year earlier, but the growth was down from a 12.3 percent year-on-year increase seen in March, according to data compiled by the MOEA.



Source: Focus Taiwan

The MOEA said that orders placed by China/Hong Kong and Europe grew 13.8 percent and 19.0 percent, respectively, to US\$9.3 billion and 6.93 billion, serving as the major driver to Taiwan's export orders growth in April. Export orders

from the United States for the month stood at US\$9.95 billion, up 6.0 percent from a year earlier. In the first four months of this year, Taiwan's export orders totaled US\$146.46 billion, up 11.3 percent from a year earlier.

TSAI CALLS FOR ENHANCED TAIWAN-EU ECONOMIC TIES

President Tsai Ing-wen said May 18 that Taiwan and the EU should seek to strengthen economic and trade ties by concluding an investment agreement as soon as possible, stating that such an accord would benefit companies, consumers and investors on both sides.

The president also expressed gratitude to EU member states, the European Parliament and other institutions for advocating Taiwan's involvement in international health decisions, adding that she hopes the European bloc will continue to support Taiwan's meaningful participation in the international community.

Tsai made the remarks during the Europe Day Dinner organized by the European Chamber of Commerce Taiwan in Taipei. Noting the recent growth in Taiwan-EU ties, she conveyed the government's determination to further expand these links through such measures as improving the local business environment for foreign enterprises.

According to the president, the government is working to transform Taiwan's economic structures and promote innovation-based growth. At the vanguard of these efforts are the five-plus-two innovative industries initia-

tive and the Forward-looking Infrastructure Program (FIP).

The five-plus-two initiative aims to foster the emerging biotech and pharmaceuticals, green energy, national defense, smart machinery and Internet of Things sectors, as well as the circular economy and a new paradigm for agricultural development. The near decadelong FIP commits NT\$880 billion (US\$29.16 billion) to upgrading the country's digital, green energy, rail transport and water resources as well as tackling the urban-rural divide.

Tsai said the two undertakings will be enacted alongside regulatory changes aimed at boosting the recruitment of top international talents, enhancing protections for intellectual property and streamlining investment procedures. These reforms will provide significant opportunities for European companies, she added.

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



Noting that the thriving Taiwan-EU partnership is based on shared values such as peace, freedom and democracy, Tsai said that enhancing relations will prove favorable to both sides. An investment agreement would serve as a key milestone in this regard by further strengthening and institutionalizing economic ties, she added.

According to the Bureau of Foreign Trade (BOFT) under the Ministry of

Economic Affairs, the EU was Taiwan's fifth largest trading partner last year, while Taiwan was the EU's sixth largest trading partner in Asia in 2015. BOFT data show that bilateral trade volume rose from US\$46.4 billion in 2015 to US\$48.97 billion last year. In addition, the EU is the biggest source of foreign direct investment in Taiwan, with the accumulated total reaching US\$41.3 billion as of the end of 2016.

TAOYUAN AIRPORT TAXI PASSENGERS NOW COVERED BY CASUALTY INSURANCE

All taxi drivers serving Taiwan Taoyuan International Airport have signed an agreement as part of an ongoing effort by the airport to upgrade service quality. As a result, each vehicle now has casualty insurance of more than NT\$5 million (US\$166.080) per passenger, Taoyuan International Airport Corp. said May 23.

The company, which started to monitor and manage the taxi drivers who serve the airport in February, said that under the terms of the new agreement,

all vehicles have installed credit card payment devices for the convenience of passengers who might not have enough cash on them.



Source: Focus Taiwan, Photo: Courtesy of Taoyuan International Airport Corp.

They have also installed dashboard cameras and satellite navigation systems which will be used in the event of a dispute. In addition, the company said it

plans to introduce a digital dispatch system in October to more effectively manage taxi operations and reduce the amount of time passengers are required to wait.

COMPUTEX OPENS; ORGANIZER AIMS TO USE INNOVATION TO BOOST ECONOMY

Computex Taipei 2017, one of the largest information communications technology trade exhibitions in the world, opened on May 29 and is expected to post a year-on-year increase in visitors.

Addressing the opening ceremony, T.H. Tung, head of the Taipei Computer Association (TAC), one of the organizers of the annual high-tech trade exhib-

ition, said that he hopes innovations in information technology will help boost economic growth. Over the past three decades, Tung said, innovations in in-



formation technology have made life far more convenient for consumers and raised efficiency in communications by lowering the cost of data processing.

As a result, Tung said, innovation has started to drive economic growth, as predicted in the early 20th century by Austrian-born economist Joseph Schumpeter. As such, the next generation of innovations will lay the foundation for better economic performance.

Tung said that the five-day Computex 2017 will highlight Taiwan's strength in information technology

development on the world stage, while this year's event is also expected to serve as a platform for technology information exchanges among exhibitors and visitors from overseas, at a time when more innovations are on the horizon.

According to the government-sponsored trade promotion group Taiwan External Trade Development Council (TAITRA), Computex 2017 is ex-

pected to exceed by over 10 percent the 40,969 visitors and potential buyers from 178 countries that attended the event in 2016. This year, 1,600 exhibitors will demonstrate their innovations at 5,010 booths, TAITRA said.

Key exhibitors include Taiwan-based PC brands Acer Inc. and Asustek Computer Inc., US-based software giant

Microsoft Corp., chip makers Intel Corp. and Advanced Micro Devices Inc. Electric car developer Tesla Inc., which entered the Taiwan market in September 2016, is also displaying its

latest models at the exhibition. This is the first time the U.S. car maker has attended Computex.

Over the past three years, Tung said, Computex has introduced a wide range of new innovations and the 2017 event will focus on the Internet of Things (IoT), smart city and smart home applications, computer gaming, augmented reality and virtual reality (VR).



Source: Focus Taiwan, Photo: Office of the President

Should you have any question, please contact us at taiwaninfo.hungary@gmail.com

TAIPEI REPRESENTATIVE OFFICE, HUNGARY

1088 Budapest, Rákóczi Rd. 1-3./II.

tro.hu, roc-taiwan.org/hu_hu