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What has DPP brought to Taiwan recently?

CHINESE VIEWS

A NOTICE pasted on the wall of a once-popular restaurant in Taipei reads: Thanks to our "benevolent" administrators, we will be shut down from May 25.

A wave of similar closures have occurred over the past year in Taipei, Kaohsiung and many of the other destinations across the island once frequented by tourists. The whole tourist industry in Taiwan is struggling.

At the popular attractions of Ali Mountain and Sun Moon Lake, favorite haunts for Chinese mainland tourists, the paths are empty, boats are stationary, and many vendors have seen few or even no customers the whole day.

On the road, nearly one-third of the 17,300 tourist buses in Taiwan stand unused, with over 3,000 for sale at a loss.

The lull follows the election of Taiwan's new leader Tsai Ing-wen, who assumed office last May. Tsai has refused to adhere to the 1992 Consensus, angering people on both sides of the Strait.

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It is estimated that this has resulted in losses of at least 50 billion new Taiwan dollars (US\$1.7 billion) in tourism revenue for the island.

Taiwan's current Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) administration had rolled out incentives to attract visitors from Southeast Asia, but the gap left by the mainland has been almost

impossible to fill. "They did not help at all," Cheng Yu-ping, chairman of YUYUPAS Ltd., which sells Oolong tea and coffee, two of Ali Mountain's major products, told Xinhua.

"The increase in the number of Southeast Asian tourists cannot make up the gap left by Chinese mainland tourists, but the DPP is ignoring this state of affairs and argues that the 'quality' of tourism has increased and the air has become cleaner with fewer mainland visitors. This kind of attitude is worrying," said Chiu Kun-shuan, professor at the Graduate Institute of East Asian Studies in Chengchi University, Taipei.

The tourist industry is not the only one feeling the pinch. In late April, a statue in Yangminshan Park, Taipei, of late Taiwan leader Chiang Kai-shek was beheaded and covered with red spray paint. A pro-independence group released a statement claiming responsibility for the act, saying it was in response to a similar beheading of a statue of Japanese hydraulic engineer Yoichi Hatta in Tainan on April 16.

Over the past year, the DPP administration has not ceased its promotion of de-sinicization and "Taiwan independence" activities in the island's cultural sector. Taiwan's education authority last year abolished a draft that proposed changes to the wording of some textbooks to better reflect history by altering "Japanese governance" to "Japanese colonization" and "[Chinese] takeover of Taiwan" to "the recovery of sovereignty over Taiwan."

Last September, two statues donated

by actor Jackie Chan to a new museum in Taiwan were splashed with paint and daubed with anti-China vitriol.

Celebrations to commemorate the anniversary of the birth of Sun Yat-sen, who led the revolution that ended imperial rule in China, as well as Zheng Cheng-gong, a Ming dynasty warlord that "recovered Taiwan" from the Dutch were also downgraded, or canceled, triggering strong backlash from the public.

"All of the DPP administration's cultural and educational policies are based on 'transitional justice,'" said Hu Yu-wei, professor at the Chinese Culture University in Taiwan.

'Transitional justice'

"Transitional justice" refers to efforts to reverse what the DPP describes as the "legacy of injustices from the period of authoritarian KMT rule over Taiwan."

Kuomintang legislator Chen Shei-saint slammed Tsai for being incapable of solving problems. "Take education for example, the DPP abolished the textbook draft as soon as they took power, and they still haven't offered an alternative. Taiwan is tearing apart," Chen said.

According to a poll conducted by Taiwan's policy foundation think tank, 42 percent of the 1,074 respondents, age 20 and above, were dissatisfied with the DPP administration's transitional justice drive, while only 15.7 percent were satisfied. In terms of youth-related policies, 64.9 percent are unhappy, in contrast to the 13.5 percent who are satisfied.

The DPP administration has put forward multiple bills to "promote reform"

since it took charge in May last year.

However, most of the bills, such as those to reform the pension program, new work rules, judicial reform as well as "forward-looking infrastructure investment program," have all wound up in endless chaos.

Since September, there have been multiple protests against the proposed pension reform. The draft proposes that the age for a full pension should be increased from 60 to 65, alongside a gradual increase of the insurance premium to about six percent, with military personnel, public servants and teachers expected to see their pension benefits greatly shrink should the proposal be approved.

The new work rules have been met with an even stronger backlash. Multiple polls indicate that as many as 70 percent of Taiwanese workers were dissatisfied with the new work rules, which mandate a regular day off and one flexible rest day per week. In the meantime, employers are also complaining of the higher costs caused by the rigid new work rules.

Tsai and the DPP administration's approval rate has therefore continued to fall. Even a poll by pro-DPP media showed that for major issues including pension reform, new work rules and energy policies, the administration's approval rate was only 20 percent.

Almost 60 percent of Taiwanese are unhappy with the performance of the current administration, according to a poll released by the Taiwanese Public Opinion Foundation in April.

(Xinhua)

West picks up interest in Belt and Road coverage



Andrew Leckey

FOREIGN VIEWS

WHILE China's One Belt, One Road initiative has now taken its rightful place in Western media coverage, that was not the case until very recently.

Its newfound acknowledgment by the West emerged suddenly, prompted by corporations seeking potential profits, trade collaboration between two world powers and a credibility-boosting news article.

Until this May, less than 100

stories combined on the topic of Belt and Road had appeared since January 1, 2015 in four of the largest and most influential US and UK publications: The New York Times, The Washington Post, The Guardian (London) and The Daily Telegraph.

In most cases, the focus in stories was on politics and the impact on trade with other countries, rather than explaining what this ambitious project actually entailed or the logic behind it. That made it difficult for readers to fully grasp its context.

A search of Internet trends using the US and UK as examples also indicates very little trending on the topic during that period.

"While the Financial Times, which is international in scope, covered One Belt One Road extensively, the other papers for educated readers provided little coverage and I don't know

that I ever heard it mentioned in TV," Martin Jacques, British journalist and expert on current affairs, told me in an April interview.

Charles Freeman, a long-time US diplomat and spokesman in favor of strong Asia-Western relations, added: "The mood in Washington began with indifference, then turned to denial and then those in the military establishment began opposing it on military concerns."

Jacques acknowledged that infrastructure development in developing countries is "not what the West does and infrastructure in any place can be difficult." But while America is a long way from the project's primary land mass and Europe is closer, what's needed by all is "vision for the future," he said.

Meanwhile, Freeman acknowledged that from a business standpoint some Belt and Road projects will have an acceptable

rate of return and some may not, but they are "definitely not military in nature."

However, in the Western media times have now suddenly changed. Today as I write this, I am viewing a BBC roundtable on the potential of One Belt One Road while reading through several significant stories about it in various western publications and wire services. The tide of western media coverage about Belt and Road has turned.

News of Belt and Road gained further credibility in the West with The New York Times May 14, 2017 article "US Firms Want in on China's Global 'One Belt, One Road' Spending." This much-quoted article represented the serious mainstream arrival of the topic to a portion of the world that hadn't previously been told all that much about it.

The article told of US corporate giant General Electric receiving

product orders in the Belt and Road region totaling US\$2.3 billion last year and noted its plans to bid for an additional US\$7 billion in natural gas turbines and power equipment this year.

The US has also formed the American Belt and Road Working Group to serve as "one node" for cooperation on the initiative.

The relevance of the Belt and Road is now firmly in play in the West. There is still much to be observed, discussed and decided about One Belt, One Road in this and coming years. But at least now a greater portion of the world is being kept up to date on its progress.

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