

Taiwan hits out at China virus travel bans

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Taiwan on Tuesday hit out at countries that "confuse" it with China after the Philippines became the latest to impose a travel ban on the island over the deadly coronavirus outbreak.

Despite its cultural links and close proximity to China, Taiwan moved swiftly against the outbreak and currently has just 18 confirmed cases of the new virus.

But the self-ruled democracy has found itself increasingly caught up in [travel restrictions](#) aimed at China, where the outbreak has killed more than 1,000 people and infected over 42,000.

Late Monday the Philippines confirmed its current [travel](#) ban for China was being expanded to Taiwan under the so-called "one China" policy.

Beijing views Taiwan as its own territory—part of a "one China"—and has vowed to eventually take the island, by force if necessary.

Taiwan's foreign ministry on Tuesday described that decision as "wrong and unilateral".

"To confuse Taiwan with China has caused troubles for our side and in the [international community](#)," [foreign ministry](#) spokeswoman Joanne Ou told reporters.

Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte has worked in recent years to warm ties with China in search of trade and investment.

Critics in the Philippines have accused him of failing to stand up to Beijing on key issues, like its expansive claims to the disputed South China Sea.

The Philippines has so far not enacted any travel bans to countries like Singapore, South Korea, Japan and Thailand even though they have more confirmed infections than Taiwan.

In recent years Beijing has pursued its "One China" view more aggressively, freezing Taiwan out of international bodies like the World Health Organization and pressuring businesses to list the island as part of China.

The coronavirus outbreak has vividly illustrated this isolation, with Taiwan the only place currently experiencing an outbreak that is not a part of the WHO.

As the virus has spread, some countries have included Taiwan in their own China travel bans.

Italy has banned flights by Taiwanese carriers, Bangladesh has stopped Taiwanese travellers from entering while Mongolia initially enacted a ban and then said it would review visa applications on a case by case basis.

Taiwanese officials abroad have been communicating with various governments to clarify that Taiwan "is not part of the People's Republic of China", Ou said.

Taiwan has also contained the [outbreak](#) and has reported no community infection cases, she added.

When asked if Taipei suspected Beijing was pressuring Manila to

expand the travel ban, Ou said: "China's shadow is lurking... I think the Chinese factor is obvious."

Taiwan said it would continue to communicate with Manila and said it had persuaded some countries including South Korean, Vietnam and Jordan to lift travel restrictions.

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