

Minister 'annoys' analyst

The director of the Center for Asia Policy at National Tsing Hua University, William Stanton, yesterday said that he was "annoyed" by the comments of Minister of Economic Affairs Chang Chia-juch (張家祝) about his analysis on how China could affect Taiwan's bid to join the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP).

Chang on Monday rebutted Stanton's views in response to a report in the Chinese-language Liberty Times (the Taipei Times' sister paper) headlined "The cross-strait service trade agreement does not relate to [Taiwan's chance to enter the TPP] either directly or indirectly."

Chang, while giving a speech at a monthly meeting at the Presidential Office, said it was "regrettable" that Stanton apparently "does not understand" the difficulties Taiwan encounters diplomatically, despite having lived in the country for so long.

Taiwan joining the TPP is not an issue which the US alone can decide, because Beijing has a bearing on the other 11 TPP members, given that most of those countries have strong trade ties with China, Chang said.

Chang added that Taiwan would only be able to sign bilateral trade agreements or become a TPP member after it completes all the follow-on agreements of the cross-strait 2010 Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement (ECFA), including a service trade deal.

The Liberty Times' report was based on a joint interview the paper and the Taipei Times had with Stanton, a former director of the American Institute in Taiwan.

In an e-mail to the Taipei Times yesterday, Stanton said: "I am not as uninformed or naive as some have indicated."

Chang appeared to "[have] misread or at least not carefully read my remarks as [the Taipei Times] reported them in English [on Monday]," Stanton said.

"What I said about the [cross-strait] service trade agreement having no effect on trade with others applied specifically to the US in particular," Stanton said.

The Liberty Times' report on Monday said that Stanton said it was inconceivable to him that the US sees a cross-strait agreement as a test case to consider a free-trade agreement with Taiwan and the nation's chance to join the TPP.

It was in this context that Stanton said there was no direct or indirect connection between the cross-strait service trade agreement and Taiwan's accession to the TPP when the US looks at Taiwan, according to the Liberty Times' report.

In the Taipei Times' version, Stanton said he did not see "any direct or indirect connection between what Taiwan does in trade with China and what the US would do to facilitate its trade relations with Taiwan or to support the nation's joining TPP talks."

Stanton said in the interview that China might use its leverage on the 11 TPP negotiating parties, other than the US, not to move forward with Taiwan's inclusion unless Taiwan signs follow-on agreements under the ECFA, adding that the US would not concede to such a precondition set by China.

"I did not disallow the possibility that China might scare off other TPP aspirants, only that the US would not be bullied," Stanton said yesterday.

As a friend, the US should do what it can to bring Taiwan into the TPP negotiations even if China might block it indirectly, he said.

“That in itself would reveal to the world once again the way the Chinese behave,” he said in the e-mail.

US Department of State senior official for APEC affairs Robert Wang expressed the same views on Monday.

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By Shih Hsiu-chuan / Staff reporter

China might put pressure on TPP members, but what China might do or say is not one of the criteria the US uses to evaluate Taiwan's interests in joining the TPP, Wang said.

