

TAIWAN TO IMPROVE ITS MEDICAL TOURISM INDUSTRY



The island of Taiwan is situated 120 kilometers off the south-eastern coast of mainland China, across the Taiwan Strait, and occupies an area of 35,801 square kilometers (13,823 square miles). Most nations, and also the UN, acknowledge Taiwan as a province of China. Nevertheless, for all practical purposes, the island with its population of some 22.7 million people, has been independent for half a century. Its capital city is Taipei.

The island is known for its high-tech industry, but now it has become increasingly involved in tourism. The Taiwanese plan to extend their medical tourism segment. For example, the Council for Economic Planning and Development (CEPD) has stated that there are plans for issuing "medical visas" to foreigners seeking medical care in the country. However, Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesman David Wang said the government will not create a new visa category specifically to accommodate foreign medical tourists. The medical tourist will go through a different process. Mr. David Wang said that "The applicant must present documents such as medical history, past correspondence with the doctors, doctor's recommendations or diagnoses in order to be granted the visa." According to the CEPD, after the 9/11 terrorist attacks in the U.S it was rather difficult to get a visa to the United States; therefore many Middle Eastern clients went to Asia to receive medical care there. Taiwan wants a part of this prosperous market for itself, but it has to compete with India, Singapore, Thailand, and Korea, who are already well-established in the business. There are highly-qualified doctors in Taiwan, and local liver disease treatment, plastic surgery and dentistry have earned a good reputation in the world. According to the CEPD, the industry needs more people able to speak foreign languages and also needs to present itself in a more attractive way to attract more patients from other countries.

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