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Lee Teng-hui arrives in Nagoya

By Melody Chen and Jewel Huagng
STAFF REPORTERS , WITH AFP
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Former president Lee Teng-hui (李登輝) began a week-long visit to Japan yesterday despite protests by China, which was furious that Tokyo allowed the trip by the pro-independence leader.

Lee smiled and waved to a crowd of supporters as he arrived in the central Japanese city of Nagoya in what his Taiwan Solidarity Union (TSU) party called a "breakthrough" against China's efforts to isolate Taiwan.

Hundreds of Taiwanese living in Japan welcomed Lee at Nagoya Airport.

"The more China oppresses Lee, the more we will support him," a leader of the Taiwanese group told ETTV cable news.

The leader said the group's office received a lot of phone calls yesterday asking about Lee's arrival time and his schedule.

The Japanese government had taken the unusual step of telling journalists and members of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party to stay clear of Lee.

But a crowd of 100 reporters and photographers were ready at Nagoya airport to receive Lee, who did not address the press as he got off his commercial flight.

Some 500 supporters greeted Lee on his arrival by waving Taiwan's national flag and the "Hinomaru," or Japanese flag, while carrying welcome banners and chanting "banzai, banzai!," a Japanese expression similar to "hooray!"

"The purpose of Lee's visit to Japan this time is to set a precedent," an aide to the former president told the daily *Tokyo Shimbun*.

"Unless a new reason emerges in the course of this sightseeing trip to deny him a visa, we expect there will be high probability that Japan would approve visa applications in the future," said the aide, whose name was not given.

Lee brought his wife Tseng Wen-hui (曾文惠), granddaughter Lee Kun-yi (李坤儀), daughter-in-law Chang Yue-yun (張月雲), doctors and two close friends with him on the trip.

A statement issued by Lee's office in Taipei yesterday said Lee would travel in Nagoya, Kanazawa and Kyoto during his weeklong stay in Japan. Lee will meet with one of his former professors, now 98 years old, at his alma mater Kyoto University.

He will return to Taipei on Sunday, his office said.

A manager at the Nagoya Marriott Hotel, where Lee, his family and friends stay, declined to reveal details about arrangements for Lee.

"We are very sorry. Our customers asked us not to leak information about them. There is nothing we can tell you," the manager told reporters in Nagoya.



Former president Lee Teng-hui waves to some 500 well-wishers upon his arrival at Nagoya International Airport in Nagoya, Japan, yesterday. Lee arrived for a week-long private visit.
PHOTO: AFP

The manager only said the hotel increased security in preparation for Lee's visit.

The hotel is located immediately above Nagoya Station and is about 40-minutes' drive from Nagoya Airport.

At CKS International Airport yesterday afternoon, many TSU and Democratic Progressive Party (TSU) officials and supporters lined up to see Lee off.

Minister of Foreign Affairs Mark Chen (陳唐山) and former TSU chairman Huang Chu-wen (黃主文) were among the throng of supporters waving to Lee as he left.

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