



## Why Won't Japan Ease Travel Restrictions on Taiwan?

Japan has lifted some of its restrictions on travel into and out of Japan which were imposed in order to guard against the spread of the novel coronavirus. Oddly, however, it has given Taiwan the cold shoulder.

On June 25, a party from Japan's business community took off from Tokyo International Airport at Narita. Destination: Vietnam. This marked the first step in Japan's resumption of normal overseas air traffic. (RELATED ARTICLE: Expect New Travel Rules As Japan Resumes Partial Business Travel With Vietnam)

Phased relaxation of restrictions on Japan's inbound and outbound travels is a must if we are to get the country's economy out of the deep freeze. However, the core premise we need to follow in doing so is that all policies should aim at preventing a recurrence of the spread of the coronavirus within Japan. To that end, we must have in place a comprehensive testing regime.

As part of its policy to stop the coronavirus at "the water's edge," Japan has refused entry to foreigners from 111 nations and regions.

While maintaining this general policy, the government will now make exceptions for travelers from four countries that have managed to bring the coronavirus under control, namely Vietnam, Thailand, Australia, and New Zealand. As a result, immigration restrictions will be relaxed for travelers from those countries.

During the first phase of the relaxation initiative, mutual entry permission for business-related travelers — including executives, managers, technicians, and technical trainees — will be permitted between Japan and these four countries, subject to PCR (polymerase chain reaction) testing and certain other restrictions.

At a June 25 press conference, Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga emphasized, "It is absolutely essential that Japan further develops its testing capacity and system."

Suga's proposals to introduce saliva-based PCR testing and dedicated PCR centers for travelers from overseas are quite reasonable.

Nevertheless, the number of test screening personnel at airports seems to be inadequate. So, if we are to allow an increase in the number of international travelers, now is the time to secure sufficient staff.

On the one hand, it is only natural that we should be looking to mutually relax immigration restrictions along with other countries where the coronavirus situation has improved. On the other hand, we should not rush to loosen restrictions on travelers from countries where there is still a grave danger of the spread of the coronavirus, even if we have close economic relations with the countries in question.

For example, China has relaxed restrictions on travel from Japan. But the Chinese capital of Beijing has just experienced an outbreak, indicating that the coronavirus is spreading there once again. In fact, a local Beijing official has warned that the city "has entered a wartime situation." Public health officials there continue to conduct large-scale PCR testing.

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China being the country where COVID-19 originated, we need to treat resumption of traffic to and from there with the utmost caution.

Nevertheless, in one respect, the new policy of the Japanese government on the selective restriction of travel restrictions raises serious doubts. Specifically, what was the reason for the exclusion of Taiwan from the initial list of countries benefiting from the relaxation?

Taiwan is not located on the Chinese mainland, and the authorities in Taiwan quickly brought COVID-19 under control. In fact, it is fair to say that it became a global model for successful coronavirus containment.

Indeed, Japan lauded Taiwan's response to COVID-19 at the annual World Health Assembly of the World Health Organization held in Geneva in May.

No doubt, Japan did not include Taiwan on the list of nations for which immigration restrictions would be relaxed out of fear of a hostile reaction from China.

We should not succumb to such irresponsible speculation on what might please or not please the Chinese government. In light of Taiwan's admirable accomplishments in controlling the threat of the coronavirus, now is the time to allow resumption of travel with our island neighbor.

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## 出入国制限緩和 なぜ台湾を含めないのか

新型コロナウイルスの感染拡大を防ぐためにとられてきた出入国制限の一部緩和が始まった。

日本人ビジネス関係者らが25日、成田空港から飛び立った臨時便で、ベトナム入りした。海外との往来再開の第一歩といえる。

冷え込んだ経済を動かすために、出入国制限を段階的に緩和していくことは必要だ。ただし、国内で感染が再び広がらないよう万全の策を講じることが前提だ。検査体制の充実を図ることが欠かせない。

日本は水際対策として、111カ国・地域を対象に、外国人の入国を拒否し続けてきた。

この制限は保ちつつ、例外的措置として、感染状況が落ち着いているベトナム、タイ、オーストラリア、ニュージーランドの4カ国との間で、出入国制限を緩和していく。第1段階として、PCR検査などを条件に経営・管理者、技術者、技能実習生などビジネス関係者らの相互入国を認める。

菅義偉官房長官は25日の記者会見で「わが国の検査能力、体制の拡充は必要不可欠だ」と述べた。菅氏が、唾液PCR検査の導入や海外渡航者のためのPCRセンター設置の考えを示したことは妥当である。

空港の検疫要員の不足が伝えられる。往来拡大に備え、今のうちに人員を確保しておくべきだ。

感染状況が落ち着いた国と相互に入国制限を緩和していくのは当然だが、感染拡大が懸念される国との間は、経済関係が密接であっても安易に認めるのは危うい。

たとえば中国は日本に制限緩和を求めているが、首都北京で感染拡大の兆しがある。同市幹部は「戦時状態に入った」と警戒を呼び掛け、大規模なPCR検査を続けている。新型コロナウイルス感染症の発生国でもあり、中国との往来には慎重な判断が必要である。

日本政府の対応には極めて疑問な点がある。最初の往来の対象になぜ台湾を含めないのか。

台湾は中国の隣に位置するにもかかわらず、迅速に新型コロナウイルスを封じ込めた。世界の模範とあっていい。日本政府は5月の世界保健機関（WHO）の総会で台湾の対応を高く評価していた。

台湾を対象にしなかったのは中国の反発を恐れたからだろう。忖度（そんたく）もいいかげんにしてほしい。感染状況が落ち着いている台湾との往来再開へ動くべきだ。

出典：【主張】出入国制限緩和 なぜ台湾を含めないのか

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