



▲ **LEFT:** Representatives of the New Taipei City Fire Department and their counterparts from two Philippine cities pose for photographs after signing a memorandum of understanding on March 14, 2019. **RIGHT:** The Taiwan-US Global Cooperation and Training Framework hosts a humanitarian assistance and disaster relief workshop.

In collaboration with the EPA's Toxic and Chemical Substances Bureau and the National Yunlin University of Science and Technology, the NFA has been offering hazardous materials first responder operations training to South and Southeast Asian countries for the past three years. The latest event, in August 2019, included 22 students from India, Indonesia, Pakistan, and Vietnam, and a workshop in November 2019 will cater to government officials, academics, and professionals from partner countries.

"Through these workshops we can export Taiwan's advanced hazardous materials response capabilities, and further develop chemical substance regulation policies and educational programs with Southeast Asian governments, first responder groups and academic institutes," Yunlin University of Science and Technology vice-president Su Chwen-tzeng (蘇純繕) says.

Taiwan is also becoming known for its swiftwater rescue capabilities, Hsiao says, which is crucial to the policy, since South and Southeast Asia contain some of the most flood-prone regions in the world.

The NFA's training center includes an artificial river channel capable of simulating swift currents, short drops, and even large open-water areas. The center has been training instructors in this field from across Asia.

After the latest training session with attendees from Binh Duong Province, Hsiao says, the Vietnamese firefighters were greatly impressed by Taiwan's firefighting suits, helmets and gloves, and they enquired about purchasing such equipment. Hsiao says he hopes that the swiftwater rescue training sessions can also attract attention to the nation's products in that field.

Another technology Hsiao says that has gar-

nered international interest is the center's updated Emergency Management Information Cloud (EMIC) system, which is a smart information system that provides vital information about natural disasters and other emergencies to the general public as well as responders. For example, it can notify the government about which areas are prone to mudslides before a typhoon hits so that the authorities can evacuate residents beforehand. As disaster relief involves multiple agencies and facilities, the system can provide immediate, accurate data to responders on relevant and available resources based on the type and location of the disaster taking place.

During the Philippine fire agency delegation's visit, the Bureau of Foreign Trade invited several Taiwanese firms to present their wares to the visitors, including standard equipment as well as high-tech products such as an earthquake warning system, a smart dynamic evacuation system, and a smart disaster prevention command system that incorporates artificial intelligence and Internet of Things technology.

The Fire and Safety Expo in May 2019 prioritized providing smart and high-tech solutions targeting the needs of New Southbound Policy partner countries.

International rescue competitions are another area in which Taiwan has made its disaster relief prowess known. In May 2018, seven firefighters won an award for outstanding excellence at the Extraction Challenge in France, while in June 2019, the Kaohsiung Rope Rescue Team took first place at the Grimpday rescue competition in Belgium, beating 30 teams from 15 countries.

"This is more than just about winning or losing," one of the contestants said. "We want Taiwan to be seen." ■



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