

# Taiwan's democracy 'threatened' by China, President says

**Taipei:** Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen says the self-governing island's democracy remains under direct threat from China, underscoring her calls for closer ties with the US and other allies.

Tsai took a lead in polls in recent months as a crackdown on protests in nearby Hong Kong escalated.

"Taiwan's most pressing challenge arises from China's expanding ambitions," Tsai said. "The situation in our region is ever-more complex and Taiwan's sovereignty - its free, democratic way of life - is under threat of being stripped away and undermined."

"We need to deepen and strengthen our international relations, and at present, we are doing so in terms of economics and across the board with many countries," she said.



A Taiwanese man watches the Democratic Progressive Party leader Tsai Ing-wen speak during a policy address. *CREDIT: AP*

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Tsai was speaking at a televised debate against opposition leaders Han Kuo-yu and James Soong ahead of elections on January 11.

Han defended his previous dealings with Chinese authorities as necessary to ensure Taiwan's economic future.

"Don't smear people. You love Taiwan? I love Taiwan also," Han said.

Soong, who commands a portion of the pro-China electorate, cast himself as a moderate who could bring political experience to the office.

**AP**

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