

DPP vows to revisit ECFA if it regains power

Written by Taipei Times

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Accusing the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) government of ramming the cross-strait Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement (ECFA) through without regard for public concerns or democratic process, the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) yesterday vowed that it would revisit the trade pact if it regains power in 2012.

“Taiwan will have to one day pay the price for its reckless passage of the ECFA,” DPP Chairperson Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文) said, one day after the KMT-dominated legislature approved the bulk of the trade pact. “This important piece of national policy should have been carefully considered, transparent and subject to legislative oversight, but we did not see this take place.”

DPP lawmakers remain divided over whether they would ask for the ECFA be repealed, renegotiated or made subject to a nationwide referendum if they return to power.

Under the terms of the agreement, both Taiwan and China will have to lower trade barriers and customs tariffs for a set number of goods by next year. The two sides will also have to establish a trade committee to hold negotiations every six months, paving the way for more market liberalization.

In the legislature yesterday, DPP Legislator Lee Chun-yee (李俊毅) said he would support the party in reopening negotiations to repeal the ECFA if the party were to regain power.

He called the pact a “national humiliation.”

“The KMT’s passage of this ECFA not only damages our country’s economy, but also our country’s sovereignty,” he said. “If the DPP were to govern again, we would overturn everything.”

If Taiwan were to unilaterally terminate the agreement, the government would have to invoke Article 16 of the ECFA, which mandates that negotiators from both sides first meet in an attempt to work out the issue. In the event of a breakdown, Taiwan would have to wait 180 days before the trade pact could be ended.

Other DPP lawmakers said that any future moves on the ECFA should be subject first to a nationwide referendum, in line with demands outlined by the tens of thousands of protesters that took part in a rally in Taipei City in June.

Tsai said she believed the DPP should let the public decide whether the ECFA should remain in effect, although she declined to explicitly say whether this would involve a national referendum.

“We believe in the democratic process and we will follow public opinion,” she said.

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Asked to clarify, Tsai said the DPP “would look at the conditions at the time and evaluate the ECFA’s negative impact” before settling on any decisions.

If the DPP were to hold a referendum on the issue, it would have to at least win back control of the legislature or convince the Referendum Review Committee that its proposal does not contradict the Referendum Act (公投法).

The 21-member committee has already rejected three similar initiatives from the DPP and the Taiwan Solidarity Union (TSU).

Yesterday, TSU Chairperson Huang Kun-huei (黃昆輝) announced alongside former vice president Annette Lu (呂秀蓮) and DPP officials that he would launch a new drive for an ECFA referendum, to take place alongside its efforts to abolish the review committee.

This is the third time that the smaller opposition party has initiated such a proposal, the other being initiated by the DPP. The party will have to gather at least 86,000 signatures to have its proposal considered by the Central Election Commission.

Despite previous rejections, which Huang said were politically motivated, the TSU said it would not change its referendum question asking voters: “Do you agree with the government’s signing of the Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement with China?”

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