

## CKS memorial restored amid low-level protests

Written by Taipei Times

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A protester holds a placard outside police barricades as workers put back a sign reading  
PHOTO: NICKY LOH, REUTERS

The Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) government yesterday restored dictator Chiang Kai-shek's name to National Taiwan Democracy Memorial Hall in Taipei, reversing a move two years ago by the then--Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) administration to remove relics of authoritarianism.

The replacement of the plaque began at about 8:10am after some 300 police officers secured the hall with barricades overnight and put up an official document stating that the hall would be closed for 24 hours for "official business."

Workers cut the granite plaque bearing the title "National Taiwan Democracy Memorial Hall" that hung over the main building into pieces. The removal was completed by noon, after which workers proceeded to reinstate the Chiang plaque.

The replacement project is expected to have cost NT\$1.1 million (US\$33,000), said the Ministry of Education, which is in charge of the restoration.

In 2007, the DPP administration renamed the memorial National Taiwan Democracy Memorial Hall. It also changed the inscription *dazhong zhizheng* to "Liberty Square" and redecorated the hall.



Police stand on guard next to barbed wire barricades in front of the National Taiwan Democracy Memorial Hall  
PHOTO: CNA

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At the time, the pan-blue camp called the removal of Chiang's plaque illegal, as the legislature had not abolished the Organic Act of CKS Memorial Hall or passed a proposed act concerning the organization of the Taiwan Democracy Memorial Hall.

The removal of Chiang's plaque led to physical clashes between the pan-blue and pan-green camps.

During the pan-blue-dominated legislature's review of government budget proposals in January, lawmakers passed a resolution saying that the ministry should complete reinstatement of the Chiang plaque as soon as possible.

"We decided to reinstate the Chiang Kai-shek plaque today in accordance with the law. We also decided, after gauging the views of opinionmakers in different sectors, to retain the 'Liberty Square' inscription," Vice Minister of Education Lu Mu-lin told a press conference yesterday.

Lu was referring to the three forums in which academics and experts on politics, sociology, community management and urban development deliberated over how to resolve the controversy surrounding the name of the hall.

"This compromise should contribute to social harmony," he said.

Lu said the ministry had done everything it could to properly plan and execute the plaque change, adding that on many occasions the ministry had told the public the replacement would take place this month.

"We understand that people have different memories of and emotional reactions to [Chiang], but we also hope that everyone will respect and tolerate different opinions and promote social harmony," Lu said.

In a press release, the ministry said it supported the creation of a hall to showcase the nation's efforts at democratization.

"But replacing the Chiang plaque with National Taiwan Democracy Memorial Hall in an illegal and undemocratic fashion was not a manifestation of Taiwan's democracy. Instead, it was ironic," it said.

DPP Taipei City Councilor Chuang Ruei-hsiung was forcefully evicted after he slipped through the barbed wire barricades. A small number of pro-independence supporters shouted "police violence" and "death to Dictator Ma" as police took him away.

At 2pm, only 11 protesters remained at the sit-in, including two Buddhist monks, an elderly man and a small child.

Screaming anti-Ma slogans, protesters compared Ma to Adolf Hitler and said the KMT government was no different from the Nazi Party in its oppression of Taiwanese.

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“If the KMT really believes that what it is doing is righteous, then why does it have to remove the plaque like a thief in the middle of the night?” said Peter Wang, a leading member of the Taiwan Nation Alliance.

The protesters laid out banners showing pictures of the execution orders signed off by Chiang during his reign.

Two American tourists who declined to give their names asked why there were so few protesters. Chiang was the cruel dictator many have accused him of being.

“If someone was to erect a statue of a Ku Klux Klan leader in the US, you bet you would for sure see a huge turn out of demonstrators, both black and white folks,” one said.

Wang said he rushed to the memorial after learning about the change on TV, adding that this probably accounted for the low protester turnout.

Executive Yuan Spokesman Su Jun-pin said that the Executive Yuan respected due procedure and differing opinions.

KMT Legislator Shuai Hua-ming lauded the ministry's move, saying it was following legislative resolution.

DPP Chairperson Tsai Ing-wen condemned the change, saying the party could not condone a “measure under which the nation's public assets are used to commemorate a dictator who slaughtered his own people.”

Chiang was responsible for the massacre that began on Feb. 28, 1947 — known as the 228 Massacre — in which as many as 20,000 people were killed by KMT troops.

“President Ma Ying-jeou said renaming CKS Memorial Hall was a public issue that should be decided by the public. But his government ... replaced the hall name in sneaky fashion,” Tsai said.

DPP Legislator Wang Sing-nan told a separate press conference that Ma's paying tribute to Chiang and restoring the name to CKS Memorial Hall would spark ethnic controversy and rub salt on Taiwan's historical wounds.

Chuang criticized the Taipei City Police Department for wasting public resources by mobilizing at least 600 officers to fend off protesters.

Aside from 600 officers deployed at the hall, Zhongzheng First Police District Director Chen Ming-cheng said there were around 300 others in the nearby area, including all MRT exits.

Chen said that the number of officers deployed was “completely in line with protocol.”

“Out of concern over possible riots, CKS hall management asked Taipei City police provide

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the necessary assistance,” he said, confirming that the district had received the request on Sunday.

Taipei Mayor Hau Lung-bin said later yesterday that the police deployment was one-tenth the size deployed when then DPP government renamed the hall, although police in 2007 said there were around 600 officers deployed. Hau also said the hall was under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education and city police were merely responding to a request.

Japanese tourist Emi Fukuda and her companions said yesterday they were disappointed when they realized tourists were barred from entering the memorial.

ADDITIONAL REPORTING BY RICH CHANG AND STAFF REPORTER

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