

Groups mark 40th anniversary of Jhongli Incident

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Free Taiwan Party Chairman Tsay Ting-kuei, left, speaks at a rally on the 40th anniversary of the Jhongli Incident outside the Jhongli Police Station in Taoyuan yesterday.

Photo: CNA

Several civic groups and pro-independence organizations yesterday gathered outside a police station in Taoyuan to mark the 40th anniversary of the Jhongli Incident (中壢事件), which is considered a watershed event in Taiwan's democracy movement.

The groups gathered in front of the Jhongli Police Station in Taoyuan's Jhongli District (中壢), waving Taiwanese "national flags" and shouting slogans such as "Unite for Taiwan," "All hail Taiwanese independence" and "Fight for democracy, justice and human rights."

Event organizers included Free Taiwan Party Chairman Tsay Ting-kuei (蔡丁貴) and Taiwan Independence Reformation Association director Lai Fang-cheng (賴方成).

"We must not forget what happened at this police station. It was a painful period in history, when Taiwanese were under the brutal dictatorship of the Chinese Nationalist Party [KMT] regime with its reign of terror and police-state tactics," Tsay said.

The Jhongli Incident refers to a mass demonstration in 1977 in then-Taoyuan County's Jhongli against alleged ballot-rigging in the Taoyuan County commissioner election in which former DPP chairman Hsu Hsin-liang (許信良) was a candidate.

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“It has been four decades, but unfortunately we Taiwanese still do not have our own nation. Why are we still being ruled by the KMT’s fraudulent ‘Republic of China’ state structure? Why do police still conduct their duties with the KMT’s martial law mentality, working to suppress Taiwanese’s aspirations for freedom?” Lai said.

Members of the Alliance of Referendum for Taiwan, Taiwan Independence Party and Taiwan Nation-Building Big Banner Squadron also participated in the rally outside the station, which was closed down for renovations.

The groups later headed to Jhongli Arts Hall (中壢藝術館) to take part in a special exhibition and academic conference, where researchers joined political figures for presentations on the historic significance and ramifications of the event.

Taoyuan Mayor Cheng Wen-tsan (鄭文燦) addressed the conference, promising to launch a plan to build a museum dedicated to preserve the memory of the incident.

“It was the first time Taiwanese stood up with courage and challenged the KMT’s oppressive rule. Because they wanted free elections and democracy, the people overcame their fear and gathered to stand up against the transgressions of the state apparatus,” Cheng said.

“The incident was a watershed moment for Taiwan’s democracy movement, where opposition to the KMT started to become better organized, to engage the public more effectively and to collaborate on election campaigns,” Cheng added.

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