

Taichung to continue Games work: Lai

Written by Taipei Times
Monday, 30 July 2018 07:43 -



Olympic medalist Chi Cheng, second right, speaks at a rally organized by the Team Taiwan Campaign for 2020 Tokyo Olympics in Taipei's Ximending area yesterday evening in support of Taichung's rights to host the East Asian Youth Games next year.

Photo: CNA

Premier William Lai (賴清德) yesterday told Taichung Mayor Lin Chia-lung (林錫山) to continue infrastructure work needed for the East Asian Youth Games, despite the East Asian Olympic Committee's (EAOC) decision to revoke Taichung's right to host next year's Games.

He also slammed China for the political suppression of sports and called on the public to show support for Taichung.

At a meeting in Beijing on Tuesday, EAOC chairman Liu Peng (劉鵬) and six of the eight committee members voted to remove Taichung as the host city, reportedly based on "political factors."

China's Taiwan Affairs Office on Wednesday said that the move was related to a referendum campaign in Taiwan to have the nation take part in international sporting events — including the 2020 Tokyo Olympics — as "Taiwan" instead of "Chinese Taipei."

"China is not willing to abide by the normal practice of putting sports above politics," Lai said as he made an inspection tour of Taichung International Airport.

Beijing's political suppression of sports is an infringement on Taichung's rights and grossly

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unfair to the 2,500 athletes from the nine countries and regions that were to take part in the Games, he said.

The Executive Yuan unequivocally condemns China's barbarism and fully supports Taichung's efforts to seek redress, Lai said.

The Taichung City Government later said in a news release that Lin would hold an international news conference today in Taipei and the city would file an appeal to the EAOC.

Lin has called on the public to show unity and make it known to the world the harm that China has inflicted on international sports, the city government said.

It also called on the EAOC to restore Taichung's rights to host the event and respect the right of Taiwanese athletes to participate in the Games.

In related news, the Team Taiwan Campaign for 2020 Tokyo Olympics held an evening rally in Taipei's Ximending (西門町) area to rally support for its referendum petition.

Chi Cheng (齊誠), who took part in the 1960, 1964 and 1968 Olympics and won a bronze medal in the women's 80m hurdles in 1968, initiated the referendum proposal, saying that she had participated in all three Games under the names Taiwan or Formosa and the nation should not be subjected to the insulting name of "Chinese Taipei."

By jeopardizing the East Asian Youth Games, Beijing has not only harmed Taiwan, but also the right of every athlete who was planning to compete in them next year, petition cosponsor Wang Yi-kai (王宜凱) said.

The signature drive for the referendum appears to have received a boost from the cancellation of Taichung's right to host next year's competition, according to one man's experience.

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Wang Hsi-ho (王希和), 71, who has been collecting petition signatures at a stand in Tainan's Dadong Night Market (大東夜市) since last month, said the 172 signatures he collected overnight represented a 10-fold increase of what he would otherwise expect.

Many young people and couples have been among the new signers and some have volunteered to work for the organizers, he said, adding that he has never before sensed passion about the issue from the nightmarket visitors.

Additional reporting by Tsai Wen-chu

Source: [Taipei Times - 2018/07/30](#)