

Water, power to PRC temple cut

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The national flag of the People's Republic of China is flown over the former Biyun Chan Temple, now a shrine to Chinese communism, in Changhua County's Ershuei Township yesterday.

Photo: CNA

The Changhua County Government yesterday suspended power and water supply to a former Buddhist temple that was converted into a shrine to Chinese communism by a local businessman, and said it would demolish illegal buildings on the property next week.

Former military officer Wei Ming-jen (魏明仁), who works in construction, acquired a Buddhist temple in the county's Ershuei Township (二水) seven years ago. He ousted the temple's four nuns and began flying the national flag of the People's Republic of China (PRC) over the complex.

The *New York Times* on Wednesday called Wei's actions a move to establish "an extravagant shrine to China's communist party."

Changhua County Commissioner Wei Ming-ku (魏明谷) yesterday at a news conference in the county rejected claims by some locals and county councilors that his inaction on the issue and was "a shame on Taiwan," saying that they were not aware of the entire story.

Wei Ming-jen, as a Taiwanese, has a right to freedom of speech, Wei Ming-ku said.

However, Wei Ming-jen's illegal occupation of the temple and use of the area to promote Chinese political ideology has slandered national dignity and camaraderie, he said.

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As such, the county government is to suspended power and water supply to the temple, Wei Ming-ku said.

Later yesterday, the county government dispatched a Department of Economic Affairs official surnamed Chao (蔡) to accompany Taiwan Power Co (台電) and Taiwan Water Corp (台水) employees to the temple to sever service in preparation for next week's demolition.

Because the complex straddles two plots of land zoned for different purposes, some of its buildings are legal and others are not, department Director Liu Yu-ping (劉育平) said.

Buildings on 5,300m2 of land are to be demolished on Wednesday next week, Liu said, adding that the department would handle the other illegal buildings at a later date.

However, the move to demolish the complex might meet with some procedural snags, as the temple, which was built in 1920, was given historic status on Tuesday last week.

The temple and surrounding areas comprising 936m2 of land is now a heritage site, county Department of Cultural Affairs Director Chou Fu-yi (周富一) said.

Prior to the local government's severing of power and water service, Wei Ming-jen yesterday told a separate news conference that he has never recognized the validity of the Republic of China government, and he aims to overthrow it.

Anyone violating his property would be "severely punished by the motherland" once both sides of the Taiwan Strait are unified, he said.

Police later took Wei Ming-jen in for questioning on the grounds that he obstructed civil servants from carrying out their duties by allegedly throwing punches at a Department of

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Economic Affairs official surnamed Tung (龔).

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