

Thousands protest pro-China media

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People protest against pro-China media in Taipei yesterday.

Photo: Peter Lo, Taipei Times

Tens of thousands of people yesterday rallied in Taipei to protest against media outlets that spread fabricated news for Beijing and called for tighter regulations to counter China's manipulation of local media.

Demonstrators started arriving on Ketagalan Boulevard in front of the Presidential Office Building as early as 7am, despite the rain, for the protest, which began at 2pm.

The purpose of the rally is to oppose Chinese authoritarianism, said Internet celebrity Holger Chen (何爾), who organized the protest with New Power Party (NPP) Legislator Huang Kuo-chang (黃國昌).

China has seriously infiltrated Taiwan's media and businesses, with CtiTV News (中視新聞) being an obvious example, he said.

The network "reports whatever it likes and promotes [certain politicians] to a godlike status," he said, adding that he wonders how many people have been brainwashed by its so-called news.

"We want such media outlets to go away," he said, urging people to stand up against media manipulation and defend Taiwan regardless of their age and party affiliation.

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Chen said that before the rally, a representative from Want Want China Times Media Group (旺旺中時媒體集團) — which owns CtiTV and the Chinese-language China Times newspaper — approached him, asking for a chance to clarify things on his Internet show and saying they were willing to make improvements.

He told the representative that all they need to do is to report about the Tiananmen Square Massacre and human rights violations in Hong Kong, Chen said.

He was referring to reports earlier this month that the China Times gave only limited coverage to massive protests against a controversial extradition bill in Hong Kong and that it removed all content directly related to the massacre shortly after the incident's 30th anniversary.

Hopefully, the rally will prompt lawmakers to improve laws to counter Chinese infiltration and motivate the executive branch to crack down on media outlets that have been infiltrated, Huang said.

“It is important that we build a defense mechanism based on the idea of ‘defensive democracy’ to protect Taiwan’s democracy and the rule of law, which are under attack,” he said.

The freedoms of speech and the press should be protected, but there must be boundaries, he added.

Huang said he had invited all major parties and presidential hopefuls to the rally, but only the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) and the NPP sent representatives.

“China has not only infiltrated Taiwan’s media, but also its schools, communities, temples and other organizations,” DPP Secretary-General Luo Wen-jia (羅文嘉) told the crowd.

To counter Chinese infiltration, which aims to chip away at Taiwan’s democracy, the nation needs to have laws requiring companies controlled by foreign states to disclose their

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relationship and related activities, he said.

Taiwan does not need news media that distort the truth to promote the interests of Beijing, NPP Chairman Chiu Hsien-chih (邱顯生) said.

The NPP legislative caucus would push for the passage of laws against infiltration and other national security bills, he added.

Former Causeway Bay Books manager Lam Wing-kei (林榮基), filmmaker Kevin Lee (李凱傑) and Taipei City councilors Chiu Wei-chieh (邱偉杰) and Miao Po-ya (苗博雅) also attended the rally.

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