

DPP demonstration set for Sunday in Taichung

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The Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) demonstration against the government's China-leaning economic policies will be held on Sunday in Taichung starting at 2:30pm, the party announced yesterday, urging the public to join the protest.

The protest will be held on the eve of the fourth meeting between Taiwan's Straits Exchange (SEF) Foundation Chairman Chiang Pin-kung (蔣經國) and his Chinese counterpart, Chen Yunlin (陳雲林), head of Beijing's Association on Relations Across the Taiwan Strait (ARATS).

This will be the second meeting in Taiwan following last November's in Taipei City, which drew massive street protests in which several people, including news reporters and police officers, were injured.

The two sides are scheduled to discuss and sign four agreements on the fishing industry, quality control for agricultural products, cross-strait inspections and avoiding dual taxation.

Speaking at the press conference, DPP Spokesman Chuang Shuo-han (莊舒涵) said an estimated 100,000 people from across Taiwan will take part, but urged protesters to exercise restraint and be rational.

Protesters will gather at 2:30pm at two locations — the intersection of Mincyuan Road (民權路) and Taichunggang Road (台中港路) and the corner of Chaoma Road (草馬路) and Anhe Road (安和路).

The processions are expected to meet up at 5pm on Hueiwun Road (懷遠路), where a rally will be held in an empty parking lot, the spokesman said.

"Everyone should come and join the protests to send a loud and clear message to President Ma Ying-jeou (馬英九) and Chen that all cross-strait issues must be conducted in an open and transparent manner. Taiwan's sovereignty must not be undermined," Chuang said, asking that protesters exercise restraint and avoid violence.

DPP Lawmaker Lee Chun-yee (李俊毅) said that if the government continues to ignore public opinion, protesters could head to the Presidential Office in Taipei next.

Chuang said the DPP would also arrange smaller activities throughout the duration of the meeting from Dec. 21 to Dec. 25. Details will be finalized today by the Central Standing Committee, he said.

Other groups such as Falun Gong practitioners and human right advocates have said they will join the protests.

Meanwhile, according to a survey conducted by the Taiwan Solidarity Union (TSU), more than half of the population believes signing an economic cooperation framework agreement (ECFA) with Beijing will hurt Taiwan's economy and livelihood.

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An ECFA will be discussed during the Chiang-Chen meeting, but will not be signed until next year, officials have said.

TSU Secretary-General Lin Chih-chia (林錫山) said 52 percent of the 1,067 respondents were dissatisfied with Ma's China policy and only 25 percent believed an ECFA would benefit Taiwan.

DPP Legislator Yeh Yi-jing (葉宜津) said an ECFA with China would crush many local industries and push the jobless rate to an all-time high.

The government must heed public opinion, she said, urging it to postpone signing an ECFA.

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