

## Most people clueless about ECFA: poll

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Most people have no idea what issues will be covered in cross-strait talks scheduled to take place in Taichung next week, the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) said yesterday.

The DPP accused the government of disregarding the principle of transparency in its dealings with China and said it was not surprising that President Ma Ying-jeou's (馬英九) approval rating has plunged to 20 percent.

A recent poll conducted by the party said 87.6 percent of the 956 respondents did not know what would be discussed at the meeting between Straits Exchange Foundation (SEF) Chairman Chiang Pin-kung (蔣經國) and Beijing's Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Strait (ARATS) Chairman Chen Yunlin (陳雲林).

This will be the fourth round of cross-strait negotiations since the Ma administration came to power last May. The two sides are scheduled to discuss and sign four agreements on fishing industry cooperation, quality checks for agricultural products, cross-strait cooperation in inspection and certification and avoiding double taxation. Issues concerning the government's proposed economic cooperation framework agreement (ECFA) with Beijing will also be discussed.

The DPP poll showed that less than 30 percent of respondents believe signing the trade pact would benefit Taiwan.

Sixty-five percent of respondents said the government should not interfere with people's right to protest during the Chiang-Chen meeting, DPP poll center director Chen Chun-lin (陳俊麟) said.

DPP spokeswoman Hsiao Bi-khim (蕭淑慎), meanwhile, accused Ma of being insincere for not issuing a formal invitation to DPP Chairperson Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文) to hold an open debate about the ECFA.

In a television interview last week, Ma said he would be happy to enter into a debate or any other form of discussion with Tsai on the ECFA.

Hsiao said Ma was making empty promises, because so far the Presidential Office had not formally invited Tsai to a debate.

The DPP spokeswoman also accused Premier Wu Den-yih (吳登益) of being arrogant, saying he had rejected college students' invitation to a debate on the issue.

"Wu's unwillingness to communicate with the people shows his pompous and arrogant mentality. Moreover, it highlights that the ECFA is nothing but an under-the-table deal," she said.

She said that any cross-strait agreement, especially an ECFA, would have a significant impact on Taiwan, and therefore the government had to ensure that the negotiation process is open

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and transparent.

Legislators from both the DPP and the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) yesterday urged the Council of Labor Affairs (CLA) to devise better ways to explain the ECFA to the public and to make the content of the agreement easier to understand.

CLA Minister Jennifer Wang (王幸男) and other officials answered lawmakers' questions about the council's public hearings on the controversial pact at the legislature's Social Welfare and Environmental Hygiene Committee meeting.

The council has recently held several public hearings to explain the content of the ECFA to labor groups and local unions, as well as how it would affect the labor market and various local industries.

KMT Legislator Lin Hung-chih (林重謨) cited recent surveys and said that despite the government's efforts to promote the agreement, most people were still unclear about what the ECFA was about.

"Some labor representatives who attended the [ECFA] hearings told me that they heard, but did not understand," he said.

DPP Legislator Wang Sing-nan (王幸男) said the government's glossing over of details had left the public confused.

Lawmakers from both parties questioned the effectiveness of the hearings, saying that photos taken at the hearings showed many people were so bored listening to the officials that they fell asleep.

KMT Legislator Ho Tsai-feng (何志強) said council officials should devise better methods to present the idea in a clear and easy to understand way, so that "even those who are illiterate would be able to understand."

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