

A cross-strait expert yesterday expressed concern over the government's plan to sign an economic cooperation framework agreement (ECFA) with Beijing, urging President Ma Ying-jeou (馬英九) to suspend negotiations on the trade pact and seek public consensus on Taiwan's global economic strategy.

Former Mainland Affairs Council (MAC) deputy chairman Tung Chen-yuan (陳雲元) said the ECFA had four flaws.

The government's economic strategy is unclear, its evaluation of the pact's benefits is incomplete, it is insincere in communicating with the public and the opposition, and its execution ability is questionable, said Tung, currently a professor at National Chengchi University's Graduate Institute of Development Studies.

Tung made five proposals to address the problems.

First, he urged Ma to form a committee to strengthen national competitiveness and solicit opinions from opposition parties, experts and academics and industrial and labor representatives to formulate the country's strategy of global economic integration.

Second, he proposed that the government sign a preferential trade agreement with Beijing to deal with the negative impact brought to the local industries by the economic accord signed between Beijing and ASEAN.

Third, to gradually normalize economic relations across the Taiwan Strait, he urged the government to continue negotiations on trade issues through dialogues between the Straits Exchange Foundation (SEF) and its Chinese counterpart, the Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Strait (ARATS).

Finally, he called on the government to clearly explain the benefits and drawbacks of an ECFA and stipulate distinctively in the proposed accord that China will not block Taiwan's effort to sign economic deals with other countries.

Although critics have warned that the agreement would jeopardize Taiwan's sovereignty, make it too economically dependent on China and lead to an influx of Chinese capital and goods, the Ma administration hopes to sign the accord during the next round of meeting between SEF Chairman Chiang Pin-kung (江丙坤) and ARATS Chairman Chen Yunlin (陳雲林), scheduled for the first half of this year, with the MAC stepping up efforts to promote the pact.

MAC Deputy Chairman Kao Charng (高昌榮) will attend an ECFA workshop in Sansia (三沙), Taipei County, on Sunday, and MAC Council Chairwoman Lai Shin-yuan (賴幸媛) will attend another one in Tucheng (土城), Taipei County, next Sunday.

Ex-MAC official urges Ma to rethink ECFA

Written by Taipei Times

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MAC Deputy Minister Liu Te-shun (劉德勝) yesterday said the trade deal would be purely economic in nature and steer clear of politics.

In other developments, SEF adviser Lee Chien-jung (李顯宗) tendered his resignation on Tuesday, one day after taking office.

Chiang is still trying to convince him to stay, said SEF spokesman Maa Shaw-chang (馬少章), adding that Lee wanted to become a non-paid adviser because he did not like doing desk job.

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