

Anti-ECFA groups join in campaign

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Pro-independence organizations vowed yesterday to launch a long-term campaign against the government's plan to sign a trade agreement with China and promised to take part in an anti-ECFA rally on June 26.

Officials and representatives from at least eight groups held a joint press conference in Taipei, chanting that they were against "secret negotiations between the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) and China that sell out a democratic Taiwan."

Their call came amid increasing speculation that a proposed economic cooperation framework agreement (ECFA) could be signed within the next two weeks.

In its strongest signal to date, the Straits Exchange Foundation (SEF) said on Sunday that talks on the trade pact, which include tariff reduction clauses and greater cooperation on cross-strait financial measures, should be seen as "a done deal."

Speaking out strongly against the move, Lo Chih-cheng (洛智成), secretary-general of the Taiwan Society and a professor of political science at Soochow University, said the government had yet to reveal the full content of the tightly guarded agreement.

"Although we are getting close to the signing date, President Ma Ying-jeou's (馬英九) administration still refuses to publicize the details of an ECFA," Lo said.

Citing a lack of transparency, opposition parties, including the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) and the Taiwan Solidarity Union (TSU), have called for a public vote on the agreement — a move twice rejected by the Referendum Review Committee.

Speaking alongside the pro-independence groups yesterday, DPP Deputy Secretary-General Kao Chien-chih (高志強) said the party's opposition to an ECFA was based on concerns that it would increase Taiwan's economic dependence on China.

"Ma's intent to sign an ECFA is against Taiwan's sovereignty and the people's interests. An ECFA could lead to a 'one China' market — which we are strongly against," he said.

Speaking for all the organizations gathered yesterday, Taiwan Rescue Action Alliance chief Lin Yi-cheng (林義順) said they would try to sway voters ahead of November's special municipality elections to vote against candidates who support an ECFA.

"We are getting ready to fight a protracted battle," he said, pledging to gather up to 1 million votes aided via the Internet in an attempt to actively dissuade local politicians from supporting an ECFA.

Billy Pan (潘世偉), head of the Taiwan Blog Association, promised to support the measure, saying the organization would encourage netizens to step up their opposition to an ECFA.

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Pro-independence organizations also floated the possibility of encircling the legislature while it reviewed the agreement after negotiations close later this month. Government officials have said that an ECFA would be sent to the legislature for final approval before coming into effect.

The groups also said they would be gearing up for more protests in the future.

“Everything we are doing ... only represents the start. It is not the conclusion of our opposition against an ECFA,” Lo said.

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