

Anti-nuclear groups call for March 9 rally

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Anti-nuclear activists protest near the Presidential Office in Taipei yesterday, calling on the public to join a nationwide anti-nuclear rally on March 9.

Photo: Liu Hsin-de, Taipei Times

As the anniversary of the March 2011 earthquake-tsunami disaster and nuclear crisis in Japan approaches, activists yesterday called on the public to join a nationwide anti-nuclear demonstration on March 9.

“Stop the budget hike for the Fourth Nuclear Power Plant! Stop dangerous nuclear energy,” dozens of people representing a number of environmental groups, including the Green Citizens’ Action Alliance, Nuclear Free Homeland Alliance and Citizen of the Earth Taiwan, chanted during a press conference on Ketagalan Boulevard in front of the Presidential Office in Taipei.

“Through our action, we demand the government stop injecting more money into the Fourth Nuclear Power Plant; stop unsafe nuclear energy programs; stop operations at the first, second and third nuclear power plants as soon as possible; and move nuclear waste out of Lanyu (蘭嶼) immediately,” Green Citizens’ Action Alliance secretary-general Tsuei Su-hsin (蔡水信) told the press conference.

“We urge as many people as possible to join us in our demonstrations not only here in Taipei, but also in Greater Taichung, Greater Kaohsiung and Taitung on March 9, to show the government our determination to put an end to nuclear energy,” Tsuei said.

Nuclear Free Homeland Alliance executive director Lee Cho-han (李朝韓) said the parade in Taipei would start at 2pm from Ketagalan Boulevard, with demonstrators walking on the outskirts of the Boai Special District, where the Presidential Office is located.

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“During the parade, we will try to seal off the area with a nuclear disaster control line to remind the president and residents how close they are to nuclear power plants, and to nuclear disasters if something goes wrong at those plants,” Lee said.

Citizen of the Earth Taiwan executive director Lee Ken-cheng (李慶生) said that residents in northern Taiwan are under constant threat of a nuclear disaster because two of the nation’s three operating nuclear power plants are located on the north coast, while people in the south are equally threatened because the third nuclear power plant in Hengchun Township (恆春), Pingtung County, is only 1.5km from a geological fault.

The Fourth Nuclear Power Plant, which is still under construction, is also in northern Taiwan.

Green Citizens’ Action Alliance deputy secretary-general Hung Shen-han (洪深漢) said a rally would begin at 6:30pm after the parade in Taipei returns to Ketagalan Boulevard.

“Many artists from the entertainment industry will show up to perform and show their support for the cause, and an overnight sit-in will follow,” Hung said.

The parade in Greater Taichung will depart from Taichung Citizens’ Square, while in Greater Kaohsiung it will depart from Kaohsiung Aouzihi Forest Park (高雄阿子熾森林公園) and the one in Taitung will start from Taitung Sinsheng Park (台東新成公園).

Presidential Office spokesperson Lee Chia-fei (李齊飛) said the government understood public concerns about nuclear safety and would adopt the highest operational standards of nuclear safety.

President Ma Ying-jeou (馬英九) has stressed that the government will not allow the Fourth Nuclear Power Plant to start commercial operations until all safety measures are completed, and the government will take all opinions into consideration during the policymaking process, she said.

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Ma is scheduled to preside over the government's negotiation platform with the legislative branch on nuclear safety today, and discuss the government's nuclear policy with Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) lawmakers in the meeting.

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