

Nuclear activists form flash mob

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An opponent to nuclear power wearing a face mask holds up a banner during a nuclear power protest in New Taipei City's Jinshan District yesterday.

Photo: Wang Min-wei, Taipei Times

About 250 people brought together by several anti-nuclear civic groups yesterday staged an anti-nuclear flash mob by forming the shape of Taiwan at a park near Taipei's Shandao Temple MRT station, as organizers prepare for next weekend's nationwide protests.

Initiated by the No-Nukes, the Nuclear-free Homeland Alliance and the Taiwan Association of University Professors, participants marked out the nuclear plants with four people holding red umbrellas and held a banner that reads "you lie, we die," to say that many people's lives would be sacrificed if nuclear officials concealed the truth about nuclear safety.

The groups said that a nuclear disaster would affect all 23 million people in Taiwan, so natural disaster prevention measures were insufficient.

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Because all the nuclear power plants in Taiwan are on or near seismic faults, and with more than 70 undersea volcanoes in the ocean near the Fourth Nuclear Power Plant in Gongliao District (公寮), New Taipei City (新北市), large earthquakes or tsunamis could cripple the plant.

Former vice president Annette Lu (呂秀蓮) took part in the event, calling on the government to respect the public's will.

"I urge the premier [Jiang Yi-huah (江宜華)], who has just announced a referendum [on the Fourth Nuclear Power Plant], to respect the people's will and maintain administrative neutrality," Lu said.

"That neutrality includes making public all investigative reports on the scandals related to the plant's construction ... the public has a right to know," she said.

Lu said the referendum should not be held in haste and that it would be better to hold at least 10 public debates so the public can better understand the issue before voting.

The groups said electricity reserves during the peak season in the summer last year were as high as 22.8 percent, and electricity powered by nuclear power plants only accounts for about 12 percent of the electricity in Taiwan, so phasing out nuclear power would not necessitate restrictions on electricity use, as officials have claimed.

They also urged the public to join in the national anti-nuclear demonstrations that will take place across the nation on Saturday.

Meanwhile, dozens of people who oppose nuclear energy marched in Jinshan District (金山), New Taipei City — which is close to two operating nuclear power plants — as part of the warm-up events for the nationwide demonstrations on Saturday.

Holding up banners and signs while chanting slogans, a group of anti-nuclear demonstrators

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yesterday joined the usual crowd of tourists on the main street in central Jinshan to advertise the nationwide anti-nuclear demonstrations on Saturday, while also calling for an end to operation of the Jinshan and Guosheng nuclear power plants nearby.

“The Japanese are known for being very cautious in particular, but they cannot resist the power of the nature and are helpless facing a nuclear disaster,” former Taiwan Environmental Protection Union Northern Coast Office director Hsu Lu (許路) said. “Who would be able to handle a nuclear disaster on such a small island as Taiwan with four nuclear power plants?”

“Nuclear energy may bring some economic benefits, but everyone must realize that the threat that it poses is much greater than what we can gain from it,” he said.

Following a march through Jinshan, the activists traveled to the Jinshan Nuclear Power Plant in Shimen District (新門區) and the Guosheng Nuclear Power Plant in Wanli District (萬里區) — both in New Taipei City — to deliver a petition asking Taiwan Power Co (台電) to close the two plants, and to stop the project to build dry nuclear waste storage facilities at the nuclear power plant in Wanli.

Prior the march in the afternoon, activists rallied along the route for a marathon across the Shimen, Jinshan and Wanli districts, telling the runners that the scenic coast they were running along is constantly threatened by nuclear disaster.

The nationwide anti-nuclear demonstrations are scheduled to begin at 2pm in Taipei, Greater Taichung, Greater Kaohsiung and Taitung on Saturday.

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