

Thousands rally against nuclear power

Written by Taipei Times

Monday, 20 May 2013 08:44 - Last Updated Monday, 20 May 2013 08:49



Demonstrators dressed in Taoist costumes march yesterday during a protest against nuclear power in Taipei.

Photo: Edward Lau / Reuters

Thousands of anti-nuclear protesters shouted “I am Taiwanese, I am against nuclear power” yesterday as they marched through downtown Taipei to call for an end to nuclear power in Taiwan on the eve of the anniversary of President Ma Ying-jeou’s (馬英九) second inauguration.

“We are extremely disappointed that the government has no regard for the threat that nuclear power poses to human life,” said Kao Cheng-yan (高成炎), a former chairman of the Taiwan Environmental Protection Union, which organized the march. “We believe that there is only one Taiwan, that people’s lives are invaluable and that there are other viable energy resource options.”

The protesters also urged the government to revise the phrasing of the proposed national referendum to decide the fate of the Fourth Nuclear Power Plant in New Taipei City’s (新北市) Gongliao District (公寮), to amend the Referendum Act (公投法) and to modify the Nuclear Reactor Facilities Regulation Act (核子反應器設施管制法) so residents living within 50km of a nuclear plant will have the right to decide whether it operates.

In contrast to the nationwide anti-nuclear protests held in March, which drew a large number of young people who expressed their stances in artistic ways and were altogether more festive, the participants of yesterday’s rally were mostly middle-aged and elderly. Members of civic groups, the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) and the Taiwan Solidarity Union (TSU) also

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took part in the protest.

“Time has proven me right,” said former premier Chang Chun-hsiung (蔣經國) of the DPP, referring to the decision he made in 2000 when he was premier to halt construction of the Fourth Nuclear Power Plant despite facing extreme pressure to finish the project.

Although the plant’s construction was eventually resumed, many people are now aware of the danger posed by nuclear energy since the Fukushima Dai-ichi nuclear power plant disaster in Japan two years ago, he said.

“Is it right to establish a plant that provides only 20 to 30 years of electricity for our generation, but leaves behind harmful radioactive waste that will affect our offspring and the environment for about 240,000 years?” he said.

Former vice president Annette Lu (呂秀蓮) added that it is wrong that the government has already spent more than NT\$300 billion (US\$10 billion) of taxpayers’ money on the plant and forces the public to live in permanent fear of a nuclear disaster.

Meanwhile, Yang Mu-huo (楊慕華), secretary-general of the Yenliao Anti-Nuclear Self-Help Association, said that although the proposal to hold a local referendum in New Taipei City was rejected by the Cabinet’s Referendum Review Committee on Thursday, advocates of the local poll would continue to push forward.

Several booths were set up along the march route, including one by the TSU that gave participants the chance to throw sandals bearing slogans such as “Impeach Ma” or “Terminate nuclear power” at two cardboard mannequins labeled “Ma’s black-hearted Cabinet” and “Bandit Ma, get out.”

The marchers converged at Ketagalan Boulevard in front of the Presidential Office at about 5pm to hear a series of speeches. They were then treated to performances by musician Chu Yueh-hsin (朱月新) — better known as Joy Topper (喜多多) — and rock band The Chairman (董事長) in the evening.

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The Taiwan Environmental Protection Union said a few of its representatives were to head to the Legislative Yuan after the event to stage 24-hour hunger strike, after which they would begin to hold a relay sit-in protest of unlimited duration.

Source: [Taipei Times - 2013/05/20](#)

Activity Slide Show: [2013-05-19 519 Rally Against Nuclear Power Plant](#)