

## Hundreds protest at KMT congress

Written by Taipei Times

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Two boys throw shoes at a picture of Vice President Wu Den-yih outside the venue of the Chinese Nationalist Party's (KMT) national congress in Greater Taichung yesterday. **Photo: Liao Chen-huei, Taipei Times**

Hundreds of people from various groups yesterday vented their ire toward President Ma Ying-jeou (馬英九) and his Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) outside the party's 19th national congress in Greater Taichung's Wuci District (梧棲), by chanting slogans and throwing shoes.

Members of the Alliance of Referendum for Taiwan and the 908 Taiwan Republic Campaign shouted: "Step down, Ma" and "No to the service trade pact," as they hurled shoes over police barricades toward convoys carrying the president and other high-ranking government officials when the vehicles arrived at the Taichung Stadium where the meeting began at about 8am yesterday. None of the shoes hit the vehicles as the protesters were barred dozens of meters away from the entrance.

Labor rights activist groups, including the National Alliance for Workers of Closed Factories (NAWCF) and the Taiwan International Workers' Association (TIWA), joined the demonstration from Taipei at about 10:30am, bringing more than 10,000 pairs of shoes.

"We've collected the shoes from Taipei, Taoyuan, Hsinchu, Miaoli, and Greater Taichung, and each pair signifies the public's discontent with Ma and his government," TIWA researcher Wuo Young-ie (吳永業) told the crowd. "Hence, we are throwing the shoes at Ma not only because we're upset about his performance, we're doing it also to show him the true public opinion — this is to remind him what 90 percent of the people think of his government at a time when his approval rating is only 9.2 percent."

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Chanting: "Return our rights to us" and "We're voting with our shoes," protesters hurled hundreds of pairs of shoes over police barricades.

When the police were preparing to declare the actions illegal, Wuo spoke up to shoulder the responsibility.

"If you [the police] want to declare our protest illegal and ask us to disband immediately, go ahead and do it, I don't care," Wuo said. "Taoyuan Confederation of Trade Unions member Yao Kuang-chu (楊光秋) and I will take full legal responsibility for this, leave the others alone."

Although the police reacted calmly to the protests, two incidents have intensified the situation.

The first occurred at about 11am when the labor rights groups were marching toward the venue, and a truck leading the parade sped up suddenly, with the driver shouting: "Taiwan belongs to the Taiwanese, this is our land."

Police officers and NAWCF volunteer peacekeepers quickly rushed to the scene, and police stopped the truck by opening the door on the driver's side and taking control of the steering wheel, while NAWCF volunteers stood in front of the vehicle.

The second incident involved pro-independence protesters shooting fireworks toward the gymnasium, with one exploding outside the press center on the second floor.

Police officers rushed to the scene to stop them from setting off more fireworks and later arrested an elderly lady who held a bag of fireworks in her hand, although she was not seen lighting any of them.

As the lady was taken into an elementary school nearby, a crowd gathered outside, calling on

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the police to release her immediately and engaging in physical clashes with officers.

After about 10 minutes, the police released the lady.

The groups spelled the English word “bumbler” on the ground with the remaining shoes before they left.

According to Deputy Minister of the Interior Hsiao Chia-chi (蕭家齊), a total of 1,200 police officers from across the country were deployed and more than 500 barbed-wire barricades used to make sure the meeting would proceed smoothly.

Source: [Taipei Times - 2013/11/11](#)