

Sunday rally planned for Ketagalan Blvd

Written by Taipei Times

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Student protest leaders Chen Wei-ting, front left, and Lin Fei-fan, right, gesture yesterday during the ongoing protest in front of the Legislative Yuan in Taipei against the cross-strait service trade pact.

Photo: Sam Yen, AFP

Without any positive response from President Ma Ying-jeou (馬英九) to their demands, student activists occupying the legislative floor yesterday said that they would organize a demonstration on Sunday in front of the Presidential Office Building in Taipei to increase the pressure on the president.

They said they may continue their occupation of the Legislative Yuan's chamber as well.

"We have been here for 10 days, yet the president has not responded to us. If he thinks that we will eventually give up and walk out of the legislative chamber on our own, I want to tell him that he is wrong," student leader Lin Fei-fan (林飛帆) told an afternoon news conference outside the legislative chamber.

"Instead of giving up, we would like to invite all citizens, regardless of their age or who they are, to join our rally on Ketagalan Boulevard in front of the Presidential Office Building at 1pm on Sunday," he said.

"If you are taking part in rallies or strikes elsewhere in the country, please come to Taipei on Sunday. We will show the government that it cannot weaken our spirit, rather as time goes by, we will only become stronger and more determined," Lin said. "We may be physically tired, but we are mentally strong."

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The plan is to end the rally at 7pm, with the crowd returning to the Legislative Yuan afterward, “but if we have enough people to fill the area all the way from the legislature to the Presidential Office Building, we do not need to return,” he said.

Lin urged those who plan to participate in the rally to wear black to symbolize that the government’s actions are returning Taiwan to the dark ages.

Another student leader, Chen Wei-ting (陳偉霆), urged all those who are still hesitating about whether to act, or those who have previously participated in the protests, but had left for personal reasons, to come back on Sunday.

“Our goal is to fill Zhongshan South Road in front of the Legislative Yuan all the way to Ketagalan Boulevard in front of the Presidential Office Building,” he said.

Lin stressed that the objective of the movement is to pressure the government to withdraw the cross-strait service trade agreement, to pass a bill to monitor all cross-strait negotiations and to hold a citizens’ constitutional conference, while also urging lawmakers across party lines to refrain from reviewing the trade agreement before the legislation is adopted.

Lin had hinted at a way to end the standoff, saying that as soon as all the ruling and opposition party legislators submit written pledges committing to the early passage of a new law aimed at institutionalizing a close scrutiny of all agreements with China, the protesters would prepare to evacuate the Legislative Yuan.

However, the proposal was rejected by the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT), with KMT caucus whip Lin Hung-chih (林滄敏) saying that party lawmakers will not sign such a pledge because a review of the service trade agreement should not be tied to the issue of legislation for an oversight mechanism on cross-strait negotiations.

The KMT caucus does not understand the students’ demands because different appeals have been made over the past few days, but it would like to hear what they have to say, Lin Hung-chih said.

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KMT Legislator Lin Yu-fang (林滄敏) called the students “spoiled children,” and said they should have a debate with Ma on issues related to the service trade agreement.

If the students are not willing to face Ma in a debate, then “please get out of the Legislative Yuan,” he said.

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