

Activists sue AEC over Taipower tests

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Activists gather in front of the Taipei High Administrative Court yesterday after filing a lawsuit against the Atomic Energy Council for allowing the Taiwan Power Co to conduct heat testing at its dry cask nuclear waste storage facility.

Photo: CNA

A group of antinuclear activists yesterday filed a lawsuit against the Atomic Energy Council for allowing Taiwan Power Co (Taipower, 台電) to conduct heat testing at its dry cask nuclear waste storage facility.

Gathering in front of the Taipei High Administrative Court, the activists — joined by several residents living in the nation's northern coast, where the nation's first and second operating nuclear power plants are located — shouted slogans such as "Power plants should retire when spent fuel pool is full" and "First confirm the removal schedule or temporary storage will become the final disposal site."

Northern Coast Antinuclear Action Alliance chief executive Kuo Ching-lin (郭景林) said the council — the nation's regulatory body for nuclear power safety — gave permission to Taipower in September last year to conduct heat tests at a dry cask storage facility for spent fuel from the Jinshan Power Plant at New Taipei City's Shihmen District (石門).

However, inserting high-level radioactive spent fuel bundles into the facility may cause great health risks to people living in the Greater Taipei and Yilan area, he said, adding that they are against such tests unless they can be proven completely safe.

Volunteer attorney for the residents and groups Tsai Ya-ying (蔡雅瑩), a lawyer at the Wild at

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Heart Legal Defense Association, said that while the council claims that the dry cask storage is only a “midterm” storage facility for spent fuel, the example of the so-called temporary nuclear waste repository on Lanyu (蘭嶼, also known as Orchid Island) leaves them with doubts.

She said that although the government said the Lanyu depot was a temporary storage site, the low-level nuclear waste has not been removed since the site began operation in 1982 and radioactive leaks have been detected at the site.

“The main problem is that the government cannot find a final disposal site for nuclear waste,” Tsai said, adding that the plaintiffs are worried that the dry cask storage of spent fuel will eventually become the final disposal site.

They urged the council to withdraw its approval for Taipower’s test runs. They also asked Taipower to provide nuclear waste removal plans for Lanyu and the dry cask storage facility.

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