

Groups tell government to stop FTA scare tactics

Written by Taipei Times

Friday, 14 November 2014 07:52 -



Members of the Economic Democracy Union and other civic organizations raise their fists at a press conference in Taipei yesterday at which they accused the government of exaggerating the potential impact of the free-trade agreement between China and South Korea to force through cross-strait trade pacts.

Photo: Chen Chih-chu, Taipei Times

Several civic groups yesterday accused the government of exaggerating the potential impact of an impending free-trade agreement (FTA) between China and South Korea after the two countries' leaders concluded talks on the accord at the APEC summit on Monday.

While the Presidential Office has said the agreement would allow South Korea to further outpace Taiwan in key economic sectors, critics say the government is overstating the impact of the treaty to force the passage of several cross-strait trade agreements and related legislation.

The groups voiced their opposition to a motion by Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) Legislator Chiang Hui-chen (蔣煥陳) to place a proposed bill to monitor future cross-strait treaties at the top of today's legislative agenda, to pave the way for the passage of the cross-strait service trade agreement.

Economic Democracy Union convener Lai Chung-chiang (賴中強) said that legislation to monitor food safety should be prioritized in the wake of the series of tainted oil scandals that rocked the nation.

"The KMT should stop its media campaign to scare the public about the threat engendered by the China-South Korea FTA," Lai said, adding that the oversight bill should not "cut in line"

Groups tell government to stop FTA scare tactics

Written by Taipei Times

Friday, 14 November 2014 07:52 -

before food safety concerns.

The agreement between China and South Korea still has to undergo legal and parliamentary review, Lai said, adding that it will likely take at least six months before it takes effect.

Lai rebutted claims by the Ministry of Economic Affairs that the agreement would inflict a serious blow on seven Taiwanese industries — petrochemicals, LCD panels, automobiles, machine tools, steel, textiles and glass — saying that most of these industries cater to the domestic market, with only petrochemicals relying on exports to China.

The free-trade pact aims to achieve an 85 percent reduction in tariffs between China and South Korea over the course of 10 to 20 years, Lai said, challenging the ministry's economic impact assessments, which he said were based the elimination of tariffs.

The deal would not have a big impact on Taiwanese exports to China, as many of these industrial goods — accounting for about 69 percent of total exports last year — are already tariff-exempt, Lai said.

Taiwan Labor Front secretary-general Son Yu-liam (孫運璿) said the petrochemical industry was the main force pushing for the passage of the under-negotiation cross-strait trade in goods agreement, and accused the government of acting as a “comprador” for “high-polluting” petrochemical firms.

The pending agreement between China and South Korea is a “low-level” FTA whose political significance outweighs its economic benefits, Son added.

Source: [Taipei Times - 2014/11/14](#)