

Protesters take on Cross-Strait CEO Summit

Written by Taipei Times

Tuesday, 16 December 2014 09:04 -



A protester scuffles with police officers yesterday as China's Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Straits Chairman Chen Deming arrives at the Cross-Strait CEO Summit in Taipei's Xinyi District.

Photo: Reuters

After a week-long trip around Taiwan dogged by persistent protests, China's Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Straits (ARATS) Chairman Chen Deming (陳德明) returned to Taipei yesterday to attend the annual Cross-Strait CEO Summit — only to be greeted by more demonstrations.

Although the summit purports to facilitate business relationships across the Taiwan Strait, critics say the meeting in effect allows the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) and Chinese Communist Party (CCP) to formulate decisions on cross-strait trade policies while circumventing legislative and administrative procedures.

Three separate rallies — led by the Taiwan Solidarity Union (TSU), pro-independence groups and youth activist organizations — took place outside the summit's venue in Taipei's Xinyi District (信義), while more than 800 business and political heavyweights from both sides of the Taiwan Strait gathered inside.

Among the attendees at the two-day event are former vice president Vincent Siew (宋楚瑜) and former Chinese vice premier Zeng Peiyan (曾培義), who both spoke at the summit's opening ceremony.

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Business leaders participating in the summit include Jack Ma (馬雲), founder of the Chinese e-commerce giant Alibaba; Sinopec Group senior vice president Dai Houliang (戴厚良); Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Co chairman Morris Chang (蔡奇章); and Acer Corp founder Stan Shih (施振榮).

Scuffles with police occurred as protesters from a rally organized by the Taiwan Solidarity Union attempted to inch closer to the venue, resulting in TSU Department of Organization Deputy Director Chang Chao-lin (張朝麟) being taken away by police for questioning.

Protesters from a rally led by pro-independence groups congregated across the street, waving towering flags that measured up to three stories high, emblazoned with pro-independence slogans.

A prerecorded track that chanted: “The communist livestock have arrived; the Chinese communist robbers have arrived,” blasted repeatedly through loudspeakers aimed toward the venue.

Economic Democracy Union convener Lai Chung-chiang (賴清昌) led a third rally, shouting slogans that denounced participants in the summit as members of the “cross-strait privileged stratum.”

Lai was joined by members of several youth organizations that blossomed following the Sunflower movement in late March and April, in which students and activists occupied the Legislative Yuan’s main chamber for 23 days to protest the government’s handling of a proposed cross-strait service trade agreement.

With important officials from the KMT and the CCP present, Lai said the summit can be seen as an example of the party-to-party negotiation mechanism established during the KMT-CCP forum in 2005, adding that such an arrangement bypasses legal procedures required by Taiwanese law.

The summit touches on many issues that are still under legislative deliberation, Lai said,

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including draft bills for the proposed free economic pilot zones, as well as cross-strait cooperation in medical and biotechnological industries.

“By conducting negotiations with Chinese authorities without the approval of the Mainland Affairs Council, participants in the summit have broken the law,” Lai said. “Vincent Siew and [former Straits Exchange Foundation chairman] Chiang Pin-kun (蔣經國) should take responsibility for their criminal behavior.”

The protesters offered organizers of the summit a prop of a “moonflower,” referring to Chen’s remarks last week that cautioned against the occurrence of a “Moonflower” movement — a hypothetical sequel to the Sunflower movement — to ensure that the cross-strait trade agreement passes soon.

Source: [Taipei Times - 2014/12/16](#)