

Ministry boosts defenses after student incursion

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Police escort students protesting adjustments to high-school curriculum guidelines outside the Ministry of Education in Taipei Friday night.

Photo: Chien Jung-fong, Taipei Times

The Ministry of Education yesterday announced new security measures following a third intrusion late on Friday night by students protesting adjustments to high-school curriculum guidelines.

Rows of 3m-tall iron barricades were put up around the ministry and the nearby K-12 Education Administration building late on Friday night, replacing barbed wire within the ministry's short perimeter fence.

The K-12 Education Administration entrance was completely sealed off behind layers of defenses, while piles of barricade panels were stacked at intervals inside the ministry's courtyard, ready to be placed on short notice.

The ministry said police erected the barriers to make the building easier to seal off following several incursions by students and a number of large protests planned at the entrance throughout next week.

It added that it reserved the right to file charges against intruders.

Controversy over what critics call "China-centric" adjustments to high-school curriculum guidelines has drawn fire from student groups, with one small group forcing its way into the

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K-12 Education Administration's office last week.

The announcement followed an incursion at the ministry's entrance late on Friday night by students from the Secondary Education Protection Front. Six students carrying spray paint and metal stencils climbed over the barriers and rushed to the front of the building to spray slogans.

Following a brief encounter with police, the students were subdued, pressing stencils, which called for the withdrawal of "brainwashing" curriculum guidelines, against the police car windows as they were driven off.

About six group members stayed outside the ministry's gates holding up plaques opposing the "black box" curriculum guidelines and calling for the resignation of Minister of Education Wu Se-hwa (吳思華).

Group spokesman Tsai Hsi-chih (蔡希之), who is to start classes at Taipei Municipal Cheng Yuan High School in the fall, said that new high-school students will be impacted the most by curriculum guideline adjustments.

She added that, while many students had been looking forward to classes this fall, they are now depressed by the prospect of being "brainwashed" with material that is historically inaccurate.

Meanwhile, National Taichung First Senior High School student group Apple Tree Commune yesterday held the first of a series of forums outside the ministry's gates opposing the curriculum adjustments, with the Northern Taiwan Anti-Curriculum Changes Alliance announcing that they would "surround" the ministry on Wednesday if their demands are not met.

The ministry announced four forums on the guideline changes to be held simultaneously on Thursday at the Affiliated Senior High School of National Taiwan Normal University, National Hsinchu Senior High School, National Changhua Senior High School and Tainan First High

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School.

The forums were scheduled to take place last month, but were canceled after the first forum ended with students confronting Wu.

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