

Chen Deming's tour of Taiwan beset by protests

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A woman is dragged away by police yesterday in Yilan County after protesting against the latest visit by China's Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Straits Chairman Chen Deming.

Photo: CNA

China's Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Straits (ARATS) Chairman Chen Deming's (陳德明) tour of the nation continued to be marked with protests yesterday.

In a visit to Jinan Temple (靜安寺) in Yilan County's Nanfanggao (南方高) — accompanied by Want Want Group (旺旺集團) chairman Tsai Eng-meng (蔡英萌) — Chen was greeted from across the road by Falun Gong protesters, who held a banner and signs behind barriers in a designated protest zone.

Green Party-Social Democratic Party Alliance legislative candidate Wu Shao-wen (吳少文) and independent candidate Sun Po-yu had earlier been hauled away from the temple's entrance after they attempted to protest the negotiations on a cross-strait trade in goods agreement.

Wu said that she had originally intended to cook a "trade in goods porridge" in her campaign vehicle using agricultural goods which could be affected by the ongoing negotiations, but instead had been forced by police to park far from the temple entrance.

She carried a banner demanding that the negotiations be halted, saying that any opening of the market to Chinese agricultural goods would hurt Yilan's farmers and could compromise food safety.

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She said the action by police was “disproportionate.”

“Today there were only five of us who went [to protest] — including two legislative candidates — what could we possibly do to [Chen]?” she asked, adding that it was unreasonable for the temple entrance to be declared “off limits” to protesters.

“The ‘protest zone’ was located across the road, but when Chen arrived he stopped directly at the [temple] entrance and went in — so there was no way he could see [the protesters]. We needed to be in a place where he was able to see us — what is wrong with going there and holding a sign?” she asked.

Chen was also greeted by protesters at a later stop at the National Center for Traditional Arts in Yilan's Wujie Township (烏吉), with members of the Free Taiwan Party attempting to charge his entourage, before being restrained by police.

The government has said that it aims to conclude negotiations on a cross-strait trade in goods agreement by the end of this month, with processed agricultural goods rumored to be on a list of products that would be opened to Chinese imports.

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