

International groups lend support for independence

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Former president Lee Teng-hui, center, former vice president Annette Lu, left, and guests attend a news conference in Taipei on Feb. 28 announcing the formation of the Island of Joy and Happiness Coalition.

Photo: Peter Lo, Taipei Times

Overseas supporters of the Formosa Alliance's (福盟) proposal for an independence referendum and the nation's participation in the UN under the name "Taiwan" yesterday ran a full-page newspaper advertisement in Taiwan announcing their support.

The advertisement in the Chinese-language Liberty Times (sister newspaper of the Taipei Times) printed the names of 1,350 leaders of overseas Taiwanese groups who support the alliance's appeals, including All Japan Taiwanese Union president Chao Chung-cheng (趙重成), Taiwanese Canadian Association of Toronto president Douglas Chiang (蔣道格), Taiwanese Association of America president Cheng Shao-fang (程少芳) and former World Federation of Taiwanese Associations Europe chapter president Lu jung-chieh (盧景杰).

Formosa TV (FTV, 福視) chairman Kuo Pei-hung (郭培興) on Feb. 28 announced plans for the alliance's establishment along with politicians who support Taiwanese independence, including former president Lee Teng-hui (李登輝), former president Chen Shui-bian (陳水扁) and former vice president Annette Lu (呂秀蓮).

The alliance has called for amendments to the Referendum Act (公投法) and is pushing for an independence referendum on April 6 next year, as well as Taiwan's inclusion in the UN under the name "Taiwan."

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When the alliance announced its declaration in February, it had the support of 150 leaders from different fields in Taiwan, the advertisement said.

Now, 1,350 Taiwanese living in the US, Japan, Australia, Canada, Europe, Central and South America and different parts of Asia are to participate in the movement by establishing overseas alliance supporters' groups in response to the alliance's appeals, it said.

Taiwanese in Taiwan and overseas are urged to support the alliance and pass a referendum to remove the false label that is the "Republic of China," the advertisement said.

Separately yesterday, Kuo said that now is the best time for Taiwan to call for independence, as the international community, the US and Japan are all very friendly toward the nation.

Taiwan should put in some effort, use the referendum to remove the Republic of China (ROC) label and stop using names like "Chinese Taipei," he said.

Since the Referendum Act does not allow for a change to Taiwan's sovereignty and territory, the alliance proposes that the Legislative Yuan amend the act immediately and allow 23.57 million Taiwanese to decide the future of the nation, Kuo added.

"Taiwan belongs to neither China nor the ROC; Taiwan only belongs to Taiwanese," he said.

The alliance is to be officially launched in Kaohsiung today, the 29th anniversary of the death of democracy activist Deng Nan-jung (鄧南仲), who died when he set himself on fire in defense of "100 percent freedom of expression."

Additional reporting by Su Fang-ho

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