

Recall advocates host final rally

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People hold up yellow ribbons of a campaign to recall Kaohsiung Mayor Han Kuo-yu at the Kaohsiung Mass Rapid Transit's Formosa Boulevard Station last night at a final rally before the recall election today.

Photo: CNA

Groups advocating the recall of Kaohsiung Mayor Han Kuo-yu (韓國瑜) last night made a final push with a rally, while the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) released a video appeal to voters' softer side.

The Central Election Commission in April verified public endorsement for a recall petition to remove the KMT mayor from office. The recall vote is to be held today.

Civic groups initiated the recall petition in June last year, after Han announced a presidential bid less than six months into his mayoral term.

The groups yesterday started with a procession through Kaohsiung, gathering at Yuandi Temple in Zuoying District (左營) before setting out toward Nanzih District (楠梓), with supporters lining the streets to greet them.

The recall campaign culminated with an evening rally in front of the Kaohsiung MRT metropolitan railway system's Formosa Boulevard Station, which included another procession on the banks of the Love River (愛河), with participants chanting: "Vote on June 6. Retake Kaohsiung."

Chen Kuan-jung (陳水扁), a convener of the Wecare Kaohsiung coalition, called on the city's residents to "be brave, be stubborn and show some effort to be responsible."

"We will determine a new future for Kaohsiung on June 6," Chen said.

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The Kaohsiung City Election Commission has said that by law, if 25 percent, or about 575,000, of the city's eligible voters, about 2.3 million residents, vote in favor of recalling Han and their ballots exceed those against the motion, the vote would be considered valid.

The recall campaign has strong backing from Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) politicians.

DPP Kaohsiung chapter director Chao Tien-lin (趙天麟) yesterday said that the recall vote would not be along political lines, nor is it for or against Han, but is rather about creating a new standard of democratic responsibility.

"The recall vote is making a statement that politicians, after being voted into office, should dedicate their term to that job," Chao said, adding that "should they abandon [their duties] midway, or allow city affairs to slide, then the turnout rate for recall votes would reflect the standards of our democracy."

Separately yesterday, KMT Chairman Johnny Chiang (江啟臣) posted a video on Facebook titled *Kaohsiung the Day After Tomorrow* (高雄的明天), in which he appealed to Kaohsiung residents to vote against recalling Han.

"We hope the people of Kaohsiung will, with their votes, retain a professional administrative team who will further contribute their expertise for the city's residents," Chiang said, speaking in Hoklo (commonly known as Taiwanese) throughout the video.

The ability to recall officials gives voters the power to combat corruption and illicit behavior, and should not be used for political infighting, but as the public are thus empowered, the KMT would respect whatever decision residents make today, Chiang said.

The city's residents must decide whether it is fair for political forces to compel the public to judge an administrative team's capabilities based on their efforts over one-and-a-half years, when they were supposed to work for four, he said.

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Elections and their results, like politics, are temporary affairs, and the KMT chooses instead to focus on Kaohsiung's ability to continually grow and improve, he added.

Kaohsiung Information Bureau Director-General Cheng Chao-hsin (程昌欣) said that Han would respect the results of the recall election.

The Kaohsiung City Government declined to comment on rumors that Han, leading the entire administrative team, would bow to Kaohsiung residents today, regardless of the outcome of the poll.

A KMT official said on condition of anonymity that regardless of the outcome, Chiang would be in Kaohsiung to hold a news conference to apologize to the city's residents.

The party would shoulder responsibility for recruiting Han as its presidential candidate, the official said.

Additional reporting by Chen Chun, Ko You-hao, Peng Wan-hsin and CNA

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