

Taiwan slams brake on \$20 bn petrochemical project

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Protesters from central Changhua county display anti-Kuokuang Petrochemical Technology Co, flags during a demonstration outside the government's environment affairs in Taipei on April 21. A controversial giant petrochemical project in Taiwan is expected to be abandoned after the island's leader voiced his opposition on environmental grounds, officials said Friday.

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Kuokuang Petrochemical Technology Co had planned to build a refinery and more than 20 related petrochemical plants costing about Tw\$600 billion (\$20 billion) on 2,800 hectares (7,000 acres) of coastal land in western Taiwan.

But President Ma Ying-jeou told reporters: "We will not support the project to go on in Changhua county. It is a difficult decision.

"We need to resolve the conflicts between economic developments and [environmental protection](#) to find a balance," he said.

Ma's decision effectively put an end to the project as his government is Kuokuang Petrochemical's largest shareholder through state oil company CPC Corporation, economic ministry officials said.

The complex has been under consideration since the 1990s but has had its location changed several times due to strong objections from local residents and environmentalists.

Activists insist that [Taiwan](#), long plagued by industrial pollution, can no longer afford such large energy-guzzling projects and staged a string of street protests against the proposal.

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