

12,000 march as anger over Diaoyu grows

LOUIS WON

About 12,000 people took to the streets yesterday in a growing wave of anti-Japanese sentiment over the disputed Diaoyu Islands.

The protest, organised by a coalition of liberal groups, was the largest since Japanese right-wing activists built a lighthouse on the islands in the East China Sea in July.

About 2,400 people took part in a similar march last Sunday.

Singing patriotic songs, chanting slogans and waving Chinese and Taiwanese flags, the demonstrators marched from Victoria Park to Chater Road where they staged a rally, accusing Japan of revived militarism.

A Japanese military flag was burned to mark the end of the five-hour protest.

Demonstrators waved banners reading "Down with Japanese militarism".

Using a wartime insult for the Japanese troops, they chanted: "Radish heads, get out of the Diaoyu Islands!"

Democratic Party legislator and Action Committee in Defence of the Diaoyu Islands spokesman Cheung Man-kwong said the turnout proved Hong Kong people were patriotic.

He called on Beijing and Taipei to "recognise the patriotism of Chinese people

► Chinese authorities ordered activist Tong Zeng (童增) to leave Beijing yesterday after he tried to organise a Diaoyu Islands protest. His wife, Chang Xisheng (常希盛), said he had been taken away by two public security officers. They did not say on what charges he was being detained, where he would be sent, or when he would be released, she said.

A friend said Mr Tong appeared to have been sent to Qinghai in the remote northwest. Mr Tong had said he was determined to stay in Beijing despite pressure from officials.

He was warned by officials last week to halt a campaign for military action against Tokyo's presence in the islands.

In Hong Kong, deputy director of Xinhua (the New China News Agency) Zhu Yucheng (朱育誠) denied Mr Tong had been forced to leave Beijing by public security officials. "Mr Tong was sent by Civil Affairs Ministry officials to work outside Beijing for a while," he said.

around the world and take concrete action with determination to reclaim the sovereignty over the Diaoyu Islands".

Another organiser, Democrat Tsang Kin-shing, said China should send troops to the islands.

"Our [People's Liberation Army] soldiers should not only kill our own people. Their guns should not only point internally," he said.

Groups from across the political spectrum, including the pro-China Democratic Alliance for the Betterment of Hong Kong and pro-Taiwan 123 Democratic Alliance, also took part.

Leading a 10-strong delegation from Taiwan, the New Party's Taipei County Councillor, Ching Jei-shou, called on Beijing and Taipei to join

forces to reclaim sovereignty over the islands.

"The issue of reunification or [Taiwan's] independence should be set aside," he said. "What we want is territorial integrity of China."

China, Taiwan and Japan all claim sovereignty over the archipelago.

Deputy Director of Xinhua (the New China News Agency) Zhu Yucheng (朱育誠) said last night the Chinese Government supported the demonstrators.

Mr Tsang said he had borrowed a cargo tanker and another fishing boat for his planned trip to the islands early next month to dismantle the lighthouse.

► About 400 people protested in Macau. The parade was organised by 11 civic organisations.