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100,000 join vigil to mourn victims

By Florence Pang
and Franz Leung

OVER 100,000 people joined an emotion-charged rally in Victoria Park yesterday evening and pledged never to let the memory of the June 4 killings fade.

At the end of the four-hour rally people stood, protecting candles from the pouring rain, and sang *Bloodstained Image* and *The Wounds of History* to mourn those who died in last year's June 4 crackdown in Beijing.

The rally, packing all six football pitches and the lawns, was the biggest in the park since June last year.

Many came in groups or as families.

People left peacefully and the MTR provided extra trains to take people home.

After the rally Szeto Wah, chairman of Hong-kong Alliance in Support of the Patriotic and Democratic Movement in China, said the number of participants had exceeded their expectations by 50,000.

The alliance estimated that there were 150,000 participants while the police estimated the crowds at about 80,000.

Mr Szeto pledged continued support for pro-democracy fugitives from China.

Every year after the June 4 killings the alliance would organise memorial activities, said Mr Szeto.

About 140,000 signatures, collected in memory of the dead, were burnt at the rally.

There was a sea of light as people held the candles high in tribute to those who gave their lives last year for the democracy movement.

Well-known pro-democracy exiles, such as Yan Jiaqi and Wu'er Kaixi, addressed the rally on a gigantic TV screen in the central arena.

Mr Yan said the people's blood would not be shed in vain.

He said the one-party dictatorship in China would eventually end.

What was said by Chinese leaders recently already showed they were awakening.

China would see

changes within one year, Mr Yan said.

Scenes from last year were relived in a documentary film. Many people wiped away tears at the scenes of hunger striking students, armoured tanks and the bloodshed.

The rally was brought to a climax when Father Louis Ha struck a gong paying respect to the dead.

"Please rest your souls and bless China," people chanted under the organiser's lead.

Many artists joined the mass-mourning.

They sat quietly in a group and chanted songs and words solemnly along with the crowds.

Among them were singer Anita Mui and film director Tsui Hak.

At the beginning of the rally Mr Szeto described last June 4 as "the darkest, the bloodiest" day.

"It was a day when parents lost their children and children lost their parents.

"It was a day China lost its elite and compatriots."

Mr Szeto, Martin Lee and John Shum carried a wreath to a cenotaph erected in the park by the alliance.

Many people had already placed flowers there.