

Premier Wu Den-yih (吳登益) yesterday acknowledged meeting Peter Kwok (郭錫), a member of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), in Hong Kong earlier this month, but denied knowing his political status and insisted he visited the territory to learn about mudslide prevention.

Wu acknowledged his meeting with Kwok on Sept. 5 after the Chinese-language Apple Daily yesterday carried the story with a photo showing Wu standing with Kwok outside a restaurant in central Hong Kong preparing to leave after apparently having a meal together.

Before the picture surfaced yesterday, Wu and the Executive Yuan only admitted that Wu had met with convener of the Executive Council of Hong Kong, Leung Chun-ying (梁振英), who is also a CPPCC member and speculated by Hong Kong media to be Beijing's favored candidate for Hong Kong's next chief executive. Wu said that they only discussed mudslide prevention.

At the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) legislative and administrative affairs meeting yesterday, Wu showed several letters from Leung and Hong Kong's Chung Hwa Travel Service, and explained the matter in front of President Ma Ying-jeou (馬英九), KMT Chairman Wu Poh-hsiung (吳伯雄), government officials and party legislators.

Wu said Chung Hwa Travel Service sent a letter of invitation on behalf of Leung on Aug. 10 for a discussion on mudslide prevention, and Leung sent a letter on Aug. 20 to thank him for accepting the invitation.

Wu, accompanied by his wife and son, met with Leung for lunch at the Jackson Room on Sept. 5, and Leung introduced Kwok as a personal friend to Wu later in the afternoon, he said.

Wu said that he then accompanied his son to a fortune teller and a dinner with his son's boss.

He returned to Taiwan early in the morning on Sept. 6, he said.

"I only knew that Mr Kwok was a businessman ... I took the trip before confirming with the president my decision to take over as premier," the premier said.

On Sept. 3 and Sept. 4, Ma talked with Wu about appointing him as premier. Wu left for Hong Kong on Sept. 5 and returned the following afternoon before the Presidential Office announced Wu would take office on Sept. 7.

Wu dismissed the Democratic Progressive Party's (DPP) accusations that he made the trip to gain approval for his premiership from China, while arguing that he has stood firm on Taiwan-centric principles whenever he met Chinese officials.

“As a former KMT secretary-general, I’ve already met many high-level Chinese officials in the past, and I’ve always put Taiwan’s interest first when meeting them,” he said.

Wu, however, refused to discuss the content of his meeting with Kwok when asked by the press yesterday. He said he felt “distressed” by challenges posed by the accusations, but added that he would be willing to be examined by the legislature and the public as premier.

Ma later gave his support to Wu, and said Wu had told him about his trip to Hong Kong on Sept. 4.

“He told me that he wanted to understand the way Hong Kong handled mudslide prevention, and it was a good thing as our nation suffered from serious mudslides,” he said.

Wu said he did not clarify the matter earlier because he thought it would be unnecessary to explain a personal trip.

The picture with Kwok drew yet more criticism from DPP legislators yesterday.

“Wu told us that he only met with Leung in Hong Kong, and now we find out about another meeting,” DPP Legislator Yeh Yi-chin (葉宜津) told a news conference yesterday.

“You [Wu] said you don’t have to tell us about the itineraries of your wife and your children [in Hong Kong] — sorry, but we don’t care about your wife and your children’s itineraries, what we care about are your honesty and allegiance, the Premier of the Republic of China,” Yeh said.

Yeh was referring to remarks that Wu made on Wednesday when responding to media questions about the details of his Hong Kong trip.

At the time, he told reporters that he was a “free man” before taking the premiership and thus did not have to reveal every detail of his trip or the itineraries of his wife and children who accompanied him on the trip.

“I wonder what else Wu has not told us?” Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) Legislator Chiu Yi-ying (邱毅) said.

Several pieces of seemingly contradictory information about Wu’s trip to Hong Kong have emerged.

Wu said last Friday that he went to Hong Kong on Leung’s invitation to learn about mudslide prevention techniques, but said on Wednesday that he took the initiative to contact Leung.

While Wu initially said that he went to Hong Kong to “learn [about mudslide prevention] from [Hong Kong’s] Civil Engineering Development Department [CEDD]” through arrangements made by Leung, he said on Wednesday that he didn’t mean he personally visited the department. Rather, he asked Leung to hand relevant documents from the department to him while he was in Hong Kong.

Wu met with second CPPCC member

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President Ma Ying-jeou (馬英九) told KMT lawmakers at a dinner on Sept. 11 that Wu visited the CEDD at his suggestion, however, Wu said that Ma only suggested that he visit a subordinate agency under the CEDD and he did not go because it was the weekend.

DPP Chairperson Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文) said Wu was stranded in a “crisis of confidence” because he did not tell the full story.

“If Wu did not do anything the public should not know, he should honestly tell the public about everything he did [during his trip to Hong Kong],” Tsai said. “This has nothing to do with Wu’s personal freedom, but as a key political figure who visited a sensitive place at a sensitive time, the public has the right to question, and he is obliged to clarify.”

KMT Legislator Wu Yu-sheng (吳育生) yesterday urged the DPP to stop focusing on Wu’s Hong Kong trip, saying that before Wu became premier, it was his right to travel anywhere he wanted.

According to a poll released by the Taiwan Solidarity Union (TSU) yesterday, 57.36 percent of the respondents said they do not believe Wu’s account of the trip, while 69.44 percent said Wu should give a more detailed explanation.

The poll was conducted from Monday to Wednesday by telephone with 1,067 valid samples collected.

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