

‘Sing China’ organized by Taipei: NTU

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Workers dismantle the “Sing! China Music Festival” stage on the National Taiwan University athletics field on Monday last week, the day after the festival was canceled because of protests.

Photo: Wang Yi-sung, Taipei Times

The “Sing! China: Shanghai-Taipei Music Festival” was organized by the Taipei Department of Cultural Affairs and therefore not a commercial activity, National Taiwan University (NTU) said yesterday.

The controversial concert abruptly ended on Sept. 24 amid student protests. Scattered incidents of violence were reported, including three students allegedly injured by members of the Chinese Unity Promotion Party.

The university said that it had twice denied a request from the department and Mu Chieh Ta Co (穆杰达), the company commissioned by the city to organize the event, to use the school’s athletic field for the concert.

The school was informed that Non-Partisan Solidarity Union Legislator May Chin (殷雪梅) had expressed concern over the denial and the school subsequently allowed the concert, NTU said.

The university presented documents showing that the department had organized the event in past years, proof that the event was a government-sanctioned one and not a commercial

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activity.

Taipei Mayor Ko Wen-je (柯文哲) on Monday said that it was not the city government, but the Mainland Affairs Council (MAC) and the National Immigration Agency, that authorized the concert.

Responding to comments from Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) Taipei City Councilor Yan Juo-fang (顏佑方) that the event was a “virus,” Ko said: “This virus was brought here by the Ministry of the Interior.”

The university said it had apologized to students and teachers for the disruption to classes caused by the requisition of the athletic field, and that it would further investigate the matter and make improvements.

The department denied any negligence or effort to pressure the school over the event.

Taipei Department of Cultural Affairs Deputy Commissioner Lee Li-chu (李麗珠) said the department had no contact with the company prior to being asked for assistance, and that it did not get involved with securing the school’s field as the venue.

The city government had no oversight, and Mu Chieh Ta Co was chosen by the Shanghai organizers, Lee said.

“What I am saying is the facts. I am absolutely not making stuff up,” she said.

Taipei Department of Cultural Affairs’ Creative Development Division head Wu Chun-ming (吳俊明) said he received a call on Sept. 12 regarding concerns over potential noise from the concert site, and a colleague did a follow-up to clarify the situation, not to intervene.

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Meanwhile, DPP Taipei City Councilor Hsu Shu-hua (許淑華) said the ultimate blame lies with Lee, saying that she was the most senior official in the Department of Cultural Affairs that authorized the event.

If the ministry did not get involved and try to facilitate the process, then the university would not necessarily have agreed to lend out the space, Hsu said, adding that Taipei Department of Cultural Affairs Commissioner Chung Yung-feng (鄭容豐) is being made a scapegoat.

The department should make information about the whole process of organizing the concert open to public scrutiny just as NTU did, she said.

NTU student body representative Hsu Hsuan-wei (許玄偉) said that although Chung has always denied that the city is responsible for the concert, Mu Chieh Ta Co has already said it was commissioned by the city to organize the event.

The company and the city had been working together for a long time, he said, adding that Ko tried to shift responsibility by saying the city was simply providing the company with assistance.

Additional reporting by Shen Pei-yao

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