

Sports associations face membership fraud accusations

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New Power Party Executive Chairman Huang Kuo-chang, left, and Fair Game! Taiwan! cofounder Lu Chi-hung press the doorbell of the Taipei District Prosecutors' Office yesterday to file a formal complaint against several sports associations.

Photo: Hsieh Chun-lin, Taipei Times

Sports advocates and athletes yesterday joined New Power Party Executive Chairman Huang Kuo-chang (黃國昌) in filing a formal complaint against various sports associations for allegedly engaging in fraud in their membership drive.

Huang, star swimmer Tang Sheng-chieh (唐聖馳) and Lu Chi-hung (盧奇宏), who helped found the sports reform organization Fair Game! Taiwan!, called on the Taipei District Prosecutors' Office to launch a probe into sports associations and the Sports Administration.

"There have clearly been many illegal activities going on over the past several weeks," Huang said. "We suspect that the sports associations are engaged in a massive collusion scheme, involving forgery of documents and setting up of dummy accounts to register large numbers of new members."

Huang also asked the Cabinet to establish a task force to investigate allegations of organized fraud by the associations, alleging that government officials in the Sports Administration had abetted the fraudulent activity.

The public fully supports the reforms sought by athletes and are upbeat with the promulgation on Sept. 20 of amendments to the National Sports Act (國家體育法), which pushed for transparency

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and financial accountability in sports organizations, in addition to requiring them to accept individual memberships and to hold elections for executive positions, Huang said.

“Instead of getting reform, we are getting fraud,” he said. “The promised reform has turned into a huge joke.”

More than 60,000 members of the public in October filed applications to join various sports associations, but the final tally on Wednesday last week was just more than 170,000, Lu said, adding that most came in the final week.

“The total figure and the number of applicants in the final week were similar for the soccer and swimming bodies, because their executives colluded to commit fraud by exchanging and adding large blocks of dummy accounts,” Lu said. “The numbers were manipulated by insiders at these associations.”

“We also received complaints from people who said that they did not apply, but still received a notice to pay membership fees. There were also other irregularities indicating that private information was stolen to register people,” he added.

A judicial probe is needed “because these associations are guilty of stealing people’s identities and forging documents. Some Sports Administration officials knew and abetted the scheme, so they are complicit in these illegal activities,” Lu said.

Huang and Lu said that they had received reports from several people, saying they were sent text messages by the Chinese Taipei Baseball Association informing them that the membership fee has increased from NT\$1,500 to NT\$2,500 and requesting payment.

“However, these people said that they never applied to become members, so it is clear that someone stole their identity to use them as dummy accounts. This is outrageous,” Huang said.

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The scheme likely involved exchanging large blocks of new applicants composed mainly of dummy accounts to ensure control over voting in the upcoming elections, Huang said.

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