

DPP slams Ma's campaigning expenses

Written by Taipei Times

Tuesday, 01 December 2009 07:15 -

President Ma Ying-jeou (馬英九) owes the public an apology for using government money to campaign for Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) candidates, the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) caucus said yesterday, accusing Ma of spending at least NT\$3.71 million (US\$115,000) a day campaigning.

The caucus also lambasted the presidential security detail for hogging the road by telling drivers on a freeway to clear the passing lane for a presidential motorcade heading for Taipei on Saturday — although some media outlets, including TVBS, reported yesterday that Ma was not in the motorcade at the time. There was a traffic jam on the freeway at the time because of an unrelated car accident.

Since Ma has been campaigning in his capacity as KMT chairman, all of his travel expenses should be footed by the KMT, DPP Legislator William Lai (賴清德) said.

The DPP caucus said the presidential plane costs NT\$380,000 (US\$11,700) an hour to operate, which works out to NT\$1.14 million for three hours. Another NT\$1.2 million goes toward overtime pay for 600 National Security Bureau (NSB) agents. Miscellaneous expenses such as fuel and lunchboxes bring the total cost for a Ma campaign trip to nearly NT\$4 million, the caucus said.

“Such a gesture shows that neither Ma nor his camp can empathize with the public, which is struggling with the effects of the economic downturn. We urge voters to show their disdain for this government through their ballots on Saturday,” DPP Legislator Chen Ting-fei (陳亭妃) said.

The KMT attacked former president Chen Shui-bian (陳水扁) for treating the plane as his personal taxi but the KMT is doing the exact same thing, DPP Legislator Wang Hsin-nan (王欣南) said.

If Ma is not actually part of a motorcade, then it cannot be considered a presidential motorcade and therefore should not have the privileges that are extended to the president, vice president and premier, DPP spokesman Tsai Chi-chang (蔡智昌) said.

“Nobody can tolerate a president who considers himself an emperor. We are living in a democracy, which means no citizens should sacrifice their right to the road for an empty presidential vehicle,” he said.

Former DPP legislator Chuang Shuo-han (莊舒涵) said the blame lay with Ma for packing 12 events into his schedule on Saturday.

Ma began the day by flying to Kinmen to visit the KMT campaign headquarters there and appear at several rallies. From Kinmen he flew to Yunlin to campaign for his party's candidate and attend the engagement party for a KMT supporter and other events. He then headed to

DPP slams Ma's campaigning expenses

Written by Taipei Times

Tuesday, 01 December 2009 07:15 -

Yilan for more campaign activities before going to Keelung to stump for the KMT mayoral candidate.

The DPP said Ma should get some rest because of a slew of gaffes during his campaign appearances — such as mispronouncing candidates' names or urging voters to cast their ballot for the KMT nominee as their mayor when the candidate was seeking a county commissioner's seat.

Meanwhile, the Presidential Office apologized for a second day for any inconvenience caused by Ma's motorcade, but refused to comment on whether Ma was in one of the vehicles.

Presidential Office Spokesman Wang Yu-chi (王郁奇) refused to say whether Ma was in the car.

"We are not in a position, nor is it appropriate, to comment on the president's route and whereabouts because of safety concerns," he said. "There is a standard operating procedure in place in terms of traffic control for the president's motorcade. It is a long-standing practice exercised by his predecessors and other foreign leaders."

Wang asked the public for understanding.

"There is always room for improvement and we have been examining our actions and making improvements," he said. "It is necessary and important to minimize inconvenience or grievances and we will make an effort to do so."

Wang said Ma attached great importance to the matter and has instructed his security detail to refrain from causing too many disturbances.

Meanwhile, Minister of the Interior Jiang Yi-huah (江宜華) and National Police Agency (NPA) -Director-General Wang Cho-chiun (王卓雄) were grilled by lawmakers on the Internal Administration Committee yesterday about the motorcade incident.

"Do you think it's right for police to tell cars ahead of the presidential convoy to get out of the lane using a loudspeaker because Ma is in a hurry to attend his next campaign event for KMT candidates in his capacity as KMT chairman?" William Lai asked Wang Cho-chiun.

Wang said the officers wouldn't know if Ma was traveling as president or KMT chairman because this information would not be included in their assignment notices.

"Besides, there was no shoulder on the section of the freeway the convoy was driving on," the NPA chief said. "But I can promise you that something like this will not happen again during the campaign."

Lai also asked if police had overreacted and engaged in political meddling when officers closed off streets and blocked a campaign parade of DPP Hsinchu County commissioner candidate Peng Shao-chin (彭紹勤) and tried to grab placards from Peng's supporters when his rival, KMT candidate Chiu Ching-chun (邱慶春), and Ma were parading through the same area last

DPP slams Ma's campaigning expenses

Written by Taipei Times

Tuesday, 01 December 2009 07:15 -

week.

Jiang and Wang Cho-chiun both denied there had been any political intervention.

“Chiu had applied for an assembly and parade permit ahead of time while Peng did not. That is why police had to ensure the parade with a permit could proceed smoothly,” Jiang said. “I’m not saying that all campaign activities must obtain permission in advance, but the fact was that one parade had permit while the other did not.

Wang Cho-chiun, on the other hand, said that the police grabbed placards protesting US beef imports from Peng’s supporters because “they considered the signs to be a protest instead of a campaign activity, and a permit is needed for a protest, according to the Assembly and Parade Act (集會遊行法).”

KMT Legislator Huang Chao-shun (黃朝俊) disagreed, saying: “Of course a candidate can make the US beef issue part of his or her campaign, it makes sense to do so.”

“The police must be more sensitive when protecting the president, especially during an election campaign,” she said.

Huang also criticized the manner in which police handled the freeway incident.

“They should have known that there was a car accident ahead, so the presidential convoy could exit the freeway before running into the traffic jam and avoid all these hassles,” she said.

The Ministry of the Interior also released numbers on candidate security and vote-buying allegations.

A total of 124 candidates have applied for police protection, and 172 officers and five bulletproof vests have been assigned to candidates.

A police crackdown between Sept. 1 and last Thursday uncovered 101 cases of vote-buying involving 701 people and 27 election-related violent crimes, with 39 people arrested in connection with the cases.

On Saturday, 6,412 officers will be dispatched to guard 6,384 polling stations, while more than 30,000 officers will be on duty as backup.

Source: [Taipei Times 2009/12/01](#)