

Taipei mayor takes jibe from TV show host in stride

Written by Taipei Times

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Taipei Mayor Hau Lung-bin (郝龍斌) made an international appearance yesterday as a US TV program poked fun at him, jokingly describing him as “the worst person in the world” for demanding the city’s public schools stop subscribing to the Chinese-language Apple Daily because of the newspaper’s News-In-Motion program.

MSNBC’s Countdown with Keith Olbermann show is an hour-long weeknight news and political commentary program with Olbermann, who counts down the day’s top stories with humor and sarcasm and pokes fun at individuals in the stories. Usually the latter do not make rebuttals because Olbermann’s show is known for making comments in a subjective and sarcastic style.

Hau, however, responded on the matter when approached by local media for comment yesterday.

Hau said he respected the freedom of the press in making the comments, but said the Olbermann show had selected an animated news clip whose content was greatly improved after the Taipei City Government banned the -newspaper on campuses.

Hau was referring to the clip of the paper’s News-In--Motion segment that Olbermann showed on Tuesday’s show about golf star Tiger Woods’ recent driving accident.

“I believe the host would not make the same comments if he had seen previous news clips from News-In-Motion, which contained a lot of sensational scenes of sex, violence and dead bodies,” Hau said.

The News-In-Motion program was launched by the Apple Daily — published by Hong Kong tycoon Jimmy Lai (黎智英) — last month in a trial run as the Next Media Group expands from print to TV. It uses animated graphics to reconstruct news stories.

Because some of the stories feature graphic depictions of sexual assault and violence, the program has stirred public anger.

Hau yesterday defended the city government’s decision to demand the city’s public schools not subscribe to the Apple Daily, adding that he would “take all the responsibility and blame” for the decision to keep students under 18 from being affected by the sensational news.

Originally, the News-In-Motion program service could be viewed by cellphone users who scanned a bar code printed in the newspaper. It is now accessible only to readers who pay a fee.

In related news, the -Association of Taiwan Journalists (ATJ) yesterday voiced concern that the Taipei City Government’s demand that schools cease subscribing to the Apple Daily

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violated freedom of the press.

While supporting measures to sanction the Apple Daily because it has allegedly violated the Children and Juveniles' Welfare Act (兒童及少年福利法) for showing violent scenes on its Web site, the ATJ said in a statement it “believes that such a ban may have violated freedom of the press, and there should not be a ‘restricted’ category for news.

“Whether to boycott a media organization should be decided following discussions with -students, teachers and civic groups — the decision should not be unilaterally made by a government,” the association said.

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