

## Presidential Office rejects Dalai Lama's criticism

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The Presidential Office yesterday dismissed comments by Tibetan spiritual leader the Dalai Lama, who said the Chinese Nationalist (KMT) administration appeared to be “aimless.”

Presidential Office Spokesman Lo Chih-chiang (洛智強) said the direction of the administration was clear.

“Our policy is Taiwan is always the focus and the people’s interest comes first,” he said.

The Dalai Lama told the Liberty Times (the Taipei Times’ sister paper) during an interview with Chinese-language reporters in Japan on Sunday that he did not know where the Taiwanese government was heading.

The spiritual leader made the comment after being asked if he would visit Taiwan again.

The Dalai Lama said his visit to Taiwan last year seemed to create trouble for the administration of President Ma Ying-jeou (馬英九). He said some Taiwanese media had produced negative reports about him at first, but that the coverage turned positive after they learned more about the nature of his trip.

He said that when he met former KMT chairman Lien Chan (連戰) in 1997, he told Lien he was not against the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Lien, however, told him that his party was.

“What about now?” the Dalai Lama asked, adding that he was confused about the direction the KMT administration was adopting.

Meanwhile, the Presidential Office declined to criticize former president Lee Teng-hui (李登輝), who on Saturday called on the public to reject Ma in the 2012 presidential election. Instead, it said that Ma’s cross-strait policy had taken a Taiwan-centered approach while protecting public interests.

“The public will judge whether former president Lee is bigoted,” Lo said.

Lo said many business groups and economic strategists in Taiwan and abroad recognized that the economic cooperation framework agreement (ECFA) the administration is expected to sign with Beijing today had more advantages than disadvantages.

On Saturday, Lee also said Ma was “not qualified to be the president of Taiwan” because he was bending over backward to cooperate with Beijing’s plans to annex Taiwan. He said Ma’s policies put Taiwan in an unfavorable position and urged the public to strongly oppose what he called the administration’s “erroneous” policies.

Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) lawmakers rallied behind Lee yesterday.

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DPP legislators told a press conference that the former president's comments were an accurate reflection of much of the public's opposition to the controversial agreement.

"For Lee to say that the DPP should win all five municipalities [due for election in November] and call on the public to boot Ma out the sake of Taiwan shows just how angry and worried he is [about the ECFA]," DPP Legislator Wong Chin-chu (王欽治) said. "Lee sees that from an overall economic perspective, an ECFA will cause Taiwan irreversible harm and danger. This is why he called on the public to boycott the Ma administration."

DPP spokesperson Tsai Chi-chang (蔡智昌) said that both Lee and DPP Chairperson Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文) agreed that the only weapon left for the public to keep the government honest in its push to sign an ECFA with China was through their votes.

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