

'Made in China' expo products anger Taipei residents

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Taipei residents have alleged that commemorative products for the Taipei International Flora Exposition which begins on Nov. 6, dubbed by Taipei Mayor Hau Lung-bin (郝龍斌) as the nation's biggest ever international exhibition, are almost all made in China.

Angry residents contacted the Chinese-language Liberty Times (the Taipei Times' sister paper) to complain about the issue saying they were shocked to find the products were made in China, with one resident saying although he originally felt proud about Taipei holding the expo, now he felt ashamed after he purchased some commemorative products to give to foreign friends and found the products were labeled "made in China."

Residents made the discovery at the Taipei City Government building, which has a booth on the first floor selling products related to Taipei that include flora expo commemorative products such as memo pads, pens, mobile phone accessories and key rings.

Taipei City Councilor Liu Yao-ren (劉耀仁) of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) criticized the city for spending more than NT\$10 billion (US\$312 million) to benefit manufacturers in China.

Large events held by the city government should aim to stimulate the domestic economy, Liu said, questioning why the city government would hand Taiwanese taxpayers' money to China.

Joining the chorus of criticism, DPP Taipei City Councilor Chien Yu-yen (陳玉芬) said the expo should aim to create value for the nation and make Taiwanese feel proud. She demanded the city government sell expo-related products made in Taiwan so as not to hurt the feelings of the public.

In response, the expo's organizing committee yesterday said that more than 90 percent of products related to the expo were made in Taiwan and those made in China were produced by Taiwanese businesses in China.

Committee spokesperson Ma Chien-hui (馬建輝) argued that the majority of companies in traditional industries had moved to China, making it difficult to ensure all expo products were locally made.

"China has become the factory of the world and so it is almost impossible for us to exclude the use of Chinese materials in the products. However, we did make sure all the products were designed by Taiwanese companies," she said.

About 10 percent of the products were designed and made by Taiwanese companies in China and the committee had instructed the manufacturers to add annotations on the back of the products that the souvenirs were made by China-based Taiwanese manufacturers, she added.

Ma promised to inspect all the products at souvenir shops to ensure their quality and said she would pull any products that failed to meet the committee's standards.

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Ma said the committee commissioned Min Sheng Cultural Company (明勝文化) — a subsidiary of the United Daily News Group — to make the commemorative products for the expo. The company had paid NT\$300 million in royalties to the city government and produced a total of 2,100 products, of which 40 are already on the shelves, she said.

Commenting on the response, Liu said it was impossible that the city government was unable to find manufacturers in Taiwan.

He accused the city government of trying to find an excuse for cutting corners.

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