

Hau admits crisis of overpriced flowers

Written by Taipei Times
Monday, 30 August 2010 10:51 -

Taipei Mayor Hau Lung-bin (郝龍斌) admitted yesterday that problems with procurement contracts handled by the city government have dampened his popularity and clouded his bid for a second term in the year-end election.

“It is without a doubt a crisis,” said Hau of the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT), adding that he has briefed President Ma Ying-jeou (馬英九) — who doubles as the KMT chairman — and KMT Secretary-General King Pu-tsung (King Pu-tung) (王金平) on the ins and outs of the matter.

A poll released yesterday, conducted by the Chinese-language Apple Daily, which questioned 770 Taipei City residents on Saturday, showed that the incident has undermined Hau’s re-election chances.

About 45 percent of the respondents said they would vote for Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) Taipei City mayoral candidate Su Tseng-chang (蘇貞昌) if the election were held tomorrow, against 43.12 percent who said they would vote for Hau.

More than 64 percent of respondents said the incident would cost Hau votes. The paper, however, did not provide further details of the poll, such as its margin of error.

A separate poll conducted on Saturday by cable news station TVBS showed that Hau still enjoyed a slim lead over Su, 51 percent to 49 percent.

Su, whose DPP has generally lagged behind the KMT in the capital, said the gaps were the narrowest yet between any DPP candidate and his or her KMT rival in Taipei City.

The controversies over the city government’s procurement contracts arose on Aug. 19 and Aug. 20 when two DPP city councilors said the contracted price for flowers used to spruce up the Xinsheng Overpass was unreasonable high.

The city government failed to clarify the issue and did not take any action until Thursday last week, when it punished the responsible officials and launched an investigation into the matter.

Another two DPP city councilors said on Friday that water pipes contracted for the overpass were bought for 10 times the market price.

Meanwhile, on Thursday, DPP city councilors also filed a lawsuit against Hau, accusing him of negligence.

While Hau yesterday said the November election would not factor into the city’s investigation of the case, Su, pointing out that Hau met with Ma and King over the matter, criticized the KMT for caring more about Hau’s votes than the voters.

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The overpriced flowers, plants and water pipes were not the only problem, Su said.

“The only thing on their mind is how to salvage votes, not how to resolve problems,” Su said yesterday. “In their mind, there are only votes, but no voters.”

Commenting on the Apple Daily’s poll, Su said there was still room for improvement because his lead in the poll remained small.

Source: [Taipei Times - 2010/08/30](#)