

Hau stays mum over Xinsheng

Written by Taipei Times

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Taipei Mayor Hau Lung-bin (郝龍斌) yesterday remained low key about an inconclusive investigation by the city into questionable expenditures for the Xinsheng Overpass reconstruction project, urging the public to wait for the result of a legal inquiry into the controversy.

Hau said his government “put its heart and soul into the probe” and would make public the results once the interviews were concluded.

While Hau had said the city would conclude the investigation in two weeks, the report was issued on Saturday, one week earlier than promised.

Hau said this was made possible because investigators had finished speaking with the 14 city employees believed to have been involved in the matter, while the contractor, Join Engineering Consultants (建華工程顧問), had declined to send officials for questioning.

While the report contained very little new findings, the city referred three city employees to the Taipei District Prosecutors’ Office for investigation, as the task force headed by Hau was unable to substantiate their claims.

Preliminary findings announced by the task force last week showed that the contractor shared a large part of the blame for the overcharges, which ran in the millions of dollars, for a beautification project.

The three city officials insist they did nothing wrong and denied the contractor’s claims that they instructed the company to raise the overall budget to facilitate the bidding process.

Dismissing allegations that the three officials were scapegoats, Hau said there would be “no limit” to the probe and that the entire process was open and transparent. With the three officials talking to prosecutors in the investigation, Hau said the truth would soon come out and the public would also understand that the city government did its best to get to the bottom of the matter.

Hau said that as long as he focused on his municipal responsibilities and the flora expo, his popularity would gradually recover.

Hau made the remarks after attending a rally with the Chinese Nationalist Party’s (KMT) candidate for Sinbei City, former vice premier Eric Chu (吳敦義), at KMT headquarters.

The pair said that if elected, they would work together to clean up the Tamsui River and renovate areas along the riverbank. They promised to earmark a five-year, NT\$50 billion (US\$1.6 billion) budget to turn the Tamsui River basin into “a second Manhattan.”

Yesterday’s event was the third time in as many months that the pair announced the same plan in a joint campaign activity.

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Hau, meanwhile, accused his Democratic Progressive Party opponent, Su Tseng-chang (蘇貞昌), of being reluctant to clean up the Tamsui River when Su was Taipei County commissioner.

Hau said he once visited Su, asking him to help clean up the river, but Su turned down his proposal without giving a reason.

Hau said he was happy to have worked with outgoing Taipei County Commissioner Chou Hsi-wei (周錫宜) on the matter, adding that water quality in the Tamsui River was the best in 30 years.

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