

Ko urges health release for Chen

Written by Taipei Times

Sunday, 07 December 2014 08:24 - Last Updated Sunday, 07 December 2014 11:19



Taipei mayor-elect Ko Wen-je paints eyes on Japanese daruma dolls — used for good luck — at a thank-you event for campaign workers at his former election headquarters in Taipei yesterday.

Photo: Wang Yi-sung, Taipei Times

Independent Taipei mayor-elect Ko Wen-je (柯文哲) yesterday renewed his call for the release of former president Chen Shui-bian (陳水扁) due to his medical condition, adding that he will pay a visit to the imprisoned Chen before being sworn in later this month.

“The issue surrounding former president Chen is a testament to President Ma Ying-jeou’s [馬英九] political wisdom,” Ko said when attending the 46th anniversary celebrations for the founding of Kang Ning Junior College for Medical Care and Management.

“I have from the beginning insisted that Chen should be allowed to return home for better healthcare, but I would advise him to stay out of politics after going home,” he said. “I know he might be losing the ability [to participate in politics], but I am afraid that some people might try to manipulate him.”

Ko made the remarks after Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) heavyweights, including the party’s 13 newly elected or re-elected local government heads, voiced the same call for Chen’s release.

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However, Ko said he disagreed with former vice president Annette Lu's (呂秀蓮) pledge on Friday to begin a hunger strike if Chen is not released by Dec. 25.

“We should refrain from making the call through such an extreme way, because it would leave no room for negotiation,” Ko said. “I am expressing my wish in a more moderate way because I think this would allow Ma to make a more rational decision on the matter.”

Commenting on the objection of the Taipei Department of Rapid Transit Systems on his proposal to construct a new MRT line connecting the Nangang Railroad Station in Taipei to Keelung because it would overlap with an existing rail line, Ko said it was an idea he and Keelung mayor-elect Lin Yu-chang (林錫山) came up with.

“Of course we will make a more detailed assessment in the future,” he added.

Ko received a warm welcome at the school, with hundreds of students waiting at the front gate before his arrival. Crowds then followed him around the campus, with students rushing to shake his hand or take pictures with him as he walked around the campus with school administrators.

In the afternoon, Ko and his wife, Peggy Chen (陳佩琪), organized a thank-you party at his campaign headquarters for volunteers who helped during the campaign.

At the party, Ko hand-painted eyes on Japanese daruma dolls — also known as Dharma dolls — as he prepared to deliver them back to Japan.

Daruma dolls are traditional Japanese “good luck” dolls modeled after the Indian Buddhist monk Bodhidharma.

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In a Japanese tradition, only one eye is painted on a daruma doll when someone makes a wish. The wish-maker paints the second eye when the wish comes true and sends the daruma doll back to the monastery where it was bought.

Prior to his arrival at his former headquarters, Ko visited stores and restaurants in the neighbourhood to apologize for any inconveniences that his campaign activities might have caused them.

Source: [Taipei Times - 2014/12/07](#)