

Security fears may affect Boai buildings

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The Presidential Office yesterday said it had asked the Taipei City Government to impose stricter regulations on the height of new buildings in the vicinity of Boai District (寶安區) to ensure the president's safety.

Boai District is a special zone where the Presidential Office and presidential residence are situated.

Presidential Office Spokesman Wang Yu-chi (王郁奇) said the office had asked the city government to make "proper adjustments" in its city planning last month and prevent the construction of taller buildings.

"To prevent further burdening the president's security detail, we hope the city government will make appropriate stipulations on the height of neighboring buildings from the perspective of city planning," he said.

I Pin Building (一品) a high-rise building complex close to the presidential residence, has been at the center of controversy as residents of the 23-story building have a clear view of the president's official residence.

Wang made the remarks in response to reports in the Chinese-language Liberty Times (the Taipei Times' sister paper) and United Daily News. The Liberty Times said the Presidential Office planned to expand Boai District to ensure the safety of the president at his official residence and that the proposed area had already been presented to the Taipei City Government.

The report said the city government tentatively agreed to the proposal and that the new area

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would be four times bigger than its present size. The plan is scheduled to become effective in February, the report said.

The report cited anonymous sources at the National Security Bureau (NSB) as saying that the adjustment was made in response to security concerns raised by I Pin Building.

The decision was made by the Presidential Office during a meeting at which bureau and Special Forces Center officials were invited to offer their opinions, the report said.

The newly proposed area would center on the Presidential Office and presidential residence with a radius of 500m, equivalent to the range of regular rifles, the report said, adding that the height of future buildings in the expanded district should not exceed 24m.

Wang yesterday emphasized that the city government would not extend the perimeter of Boai District nor ban the construction of new buildings. Instead, the city would reduce incentives to discourage contractors from building taller buildings or ask them to build lower buildings inside the district while offering them incentives for projects outside the district, he said.

Under the NSB plan, Wang said, the closer buildings were to the Presidential Office and presidential residence, the lower they would be.

As city planning is under the jurisdiction of the city government, it has to follow certain procedures before the city government makes a final decision and the Presidential Office would respect it, he said.

“Anyhow, it is a win-win-win situation for the contractors, residents and the Presidential Office because the rights of the contractors and residents are not infringed upon and the safety of the president is ensured,” he said.

In response, Taipei Mayor Hau Lung-bin (郝龍斌) yesterday said the city government’s directive on the expansion of Boai District was issued in accordance with the Presidential Office’s plan.

The city government issued a directive on Aug. 10 to include the area between Zhongshan S Road, Xinyi Road, Hangzhou S Road, Aiguo E Road, Zhonghua Road, Heping W Road and Zhongxiao W Road.

GUN RANGES

Hau said the NSB determined the expansion area according to different gun ranges to protect the president’s safety, and the city government was simply cooperating with the Presidential Office’s plan.

Hau acknowledged that the plan affected the city’s urban planning projects, calling on the Presidential Office to reexamine its plan when asked to comment on the Democratic Progressive Party’s (DPP) criticism of the government’s decision to expand the district.

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“I will relay public opinion to the Presidential Office and ask the Presidential Office to reexamine its plan,” he said.

Ting Yu-chun (丁玉春), commissioner of Taipei City’s Department of Urban Development, said 29 construction projects and 10 urban development projects would be affected by the rezoning and height restrictions.

COMPENSATION

The department would seek to resolve the issue by offering construction companies building capacity transfer as compensation.

As for buildings taller than 24m that have already been completed, Ting said the department has the authority to demolish part of the buildings after the directive takes effect in February according to the Construction Law (建築法).

Taipei City councilors yesterday challenged the Presidential Office’s move, urging the city government to insist on its authority over urban planning in the city and protect the rights of Taipei residents.

“Urban planning is under the authority of the Taipei City Government, and it’s the National Security Bureau’s problem if it has trouble exercising its duty. In this case, the president should move to another location,” New Party Taipei City Councilor Huang Shan-shan (黃珊珊) said yesterday at the Taipei City Council.

Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) Taipei City Councilor Chen Cheng-chong (陳盛充) joined Huang in urging the city government not to sacrifice the rights of Taipei residents and said the Presidential Office should not expand Boai District to protect certain individuals.

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