

Lee Teng-hui brushes off KMT barbs as politicking

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Former president Lee Teng-hui talks to the media outside the venue of a fundraising dinner for the Lee Teng-hui Foundation in Taipei yesterday.

Photo: Wang Yi-sung, Taipei Times

Former president Lee Teng-hui (李登輝) yesterday said the Chinese Nationalist Party's (KMT) vituperative attacks on him over an interview he gave to a Japanese magazine were baseless and were an attempt to win votes.

Over the past few days, President Ma Ying-jeou (馬英九), KMT presidential candidate Hung Hsiu-chu (洪秀柱) and other KMT and pan-blue politicians have criticized Lee over remarks he made during an interview with the Japanese magazine *Voice*, when he said that Taiwan did not fight a war of resistance against Japan during the Japanese colonial era, and that many Taiwanese joined the Japanese Imperial Army at that time to fight for their motherland, which they thought of as Imperial Japan.

"Politicians should always tell people the truth," Lee said, before he walked into a fund-raising dinner for the Lee Teng-hui Foundation in Taipei, in response to media requests for comment on the KMT's accusations.

"There was no 'War of Resistance Against Japan' in Taiwan, because at that time, Taiwan belonged to Japan, so there was no such thing, you can ask anyone who is over 70 years old in Taiwan about it."

"The KMT was fighting the war of resistance against Japan in China, and tried to relate it to

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Taiwan, but it is just not something that happened in Taiwan,” he said.

Lee said he was born in 1923, during the Japanese colonial era, and also served in the Japanese Imperial Army, as did between 100,000 and 200,000 other Taiwanese men, “and we were in the military to fight for Japan.”

He then attacked the KMT for what he said was an intentional attempt to confuse the public to win votes.

“Because they are not confident about the elections, they are making things up to try and humiliate me, and saying that I am too old to think clearly. Well, I am old, but I can still think very clearly,” he said.

Asked to respond to Ma’s call for him to apologize for his remarks, Lee said it is nonsense that someone who tells the truth should apologize, adding that Ma should focus his energy on coming up with policy ideas that might benefit the nation.

“He should compare how well things were during the 12 years when I was in power with how things are today,” Lee said. “It is more important [for a president] to exercise good governance, after all.”

As for KMT lawmakers’ call to cancel his privileges as a retired president, Lee said it is up to the legislature to make the decision, and he does not think the majority of lawmakers would agree with the move.

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