

DPP needs fair, open, ‘paradigm-setting’ primary: Lai

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Former premier William Lai speaks at the launch of his new book in Taipei yesterday.

Photo: Fang Pin-chao, Taipei Times

The Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) needs to hold a fair, open and “paradigm-setting” presidential primary to regain the public’s trust, former premier and presidential hopeful William Lai (賴清德) said yesterday.

Lai made the remarks at a book launch in Taipei for his memoir Hope Through Action: The William Lai Style of Leadership (用行動帶來希望), which covers his second term as Tainan mayor and his term as premier.

Lai and President Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文) last week separately registered for the party’s presidential primary.

Until Lai’s announcement on Monday last week that he would run, which caught many party members off-guard, only Tsai had announced a bid for the party’s nomination.

DPP officials should not be pressured to take sides, the party organization should not mobilize to support one candidate over another, and factions should stay out of the contest, Lai said yesterday.

“The primary is a platform for candidates to talk about their ideals; only by holding a paradigm-setting primary will the DPP gain public support,” he said. “I would rather lose the primary than cause harm to President Tsai Ing-wen.”

Talking about the book, Lai said that he had asked Tsai for her position on several key issues before he agreed to become premier.

According to the book, Lai told Tsai that amendments to the Labor Standards Act (勞基法) were severely flawed and requested Tsai’s support for amending the law a second time, which he obtained.

The subject of granting a presidential pardon to former president Chen Shui-bian (陳水扁) was also brought up and Tsai said that she would work toward that goal.

Tsai also promised Lai that he would be able to maintain his pro-independence stance as the premier and that she was committed to pushing constitutional reforms through the Legislative Yuan, he wrote.

“These accounts ... attempt to provide a historical record of our achievements and failures, the responsibilities of which must be shared collectively,” Lai said. “There was never any attempt on my part to harm the presidency or to oust Tsai. I will not respond to comments released to the media by a so-called high-ranking DPP official.”

The book was not written to boost his presidential campaign, he said, adding that work on the manuscript began in the third year of his second term as Tainan mayor.

After the DPP’s losses in the nine-in-one elections in November last year, Lai resigned as premier and then added the 500 days of his term as premier to the manuscript, he said.

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