

## President Chen and Vice President Lu Meet with the Heads of the Five Yuans

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President Chen Shui-bian, together with Vice President Lu Hsiu-lien, invited the presidents of the five yuans [branches of government] to come for tea at the Office of the President. During his talk at the meeting, President Chen emphasized that the election has come and gone, but the nation is eternal. Most of all, there is only one Taiwan. Taiwan belongs to the 23 million people of Taiwan. We cannot afford to split up, nor can we afford to rip apart. He expressed the hope that the country will not be torn apart by the brief interruption of an election.

At the meeting, President Chen gave a full explanation of the shooting on March 19 and how he felt at that moment. The president also asked that everyone try to empathize with others, approach the post-election controversy with compassion and tolerance, and handle the protests with a gentle hand.

President Chen stressed that if an advance, immediate, and thorough investigation to uncover any problems with the presidential election ballots could be conducted, he would be happy to offer his blessings and support. He said that it remained the top priority for the government to "unite the people of Taiwan, stabilize cross-strait relations, maintain social order, and achieve economic prosperity." No one wants to win the election but lose Taiwan, not to mention lose both of them. Instead, he put forward "listening, understanding, legality, and unity" as the four principles to deal with present events.

The full text of the president's remarks follows:

I would like to thank the presidents of the five yuans for their attendance here. Before I began my official remarks, I would like to address recent doubts that I was not in fact hurt, and let everyone see the current condition of my wound. As a national leader, on such an occasion, I expose the injury on my belly for all to see. I hope that everyone can witness for themselves whether or not I am really injured. I show you all my injury with great reluctance. Much to my regret, some people even now still have doubts.

On March 19, we arrived in Tainan earlier than planned for the rally to seek voters' support. Everyone was full of enthusiasm and the firecrackers were very loud. It

never occurred to me that something like this would happen. In that first instance, my instinctive reaction was that I had been wounded by a firecracker, for I felt great pain. Because of the infectious fervor of supporters, however, I was in very high spirits. I continued to wave my hand while enduring the pain. Then I saw the vice president's knee bleeding. There was a hole. I said, "You've been hit, too." Although I was skeptical that we had both been struck by firecrackers, I gave it little thought. You all know that I am a very strong man. In front of so many enthusiastic supporters on the eve of the election, I had to be very strong and go on with my rally. Later, I saw blood stains on my shirt, especially my undershirt, and asked a security officer to apply some ointment for me. The vehicle did not stop, so the people outside did not know what was happening. I continued with my rally. The security officer said that Mentholatum [ointment] was no use because the wound was very big. My response was that I still wanted to move on and that we absolutely could not stop. Then the doctor came over, and we saw a bullet hole in the windshield in front of us. Only then did we realize that it was a serious matter. Security personnel thought that we should rush to the hospital. I did not insist anymore. We rushed to Chi Mei Medical Center. The hospital said that I should lie down and be wheeled in on a gurney. I said that I did not want to lie on a gurney. Then they said that I should sit in a wheelchair. I said that I didn't want to sit in a wheelchair, either. My feeling at the time was, first, as leader of the country and incumbent president of the Republic of China-as a president-I could not fall easily; second, I had another identity, that of a presidential candidate, and as commander-in-chief [of my campaign], I could even less afford to fall easily, unless I could no longer hold myself up. Before my surgery was completed, I did not know just how seriously I had been injured. I did not take a look. I first saw my wound only after it had been treated and sutured. I did not know until later that when my wife received a phone call from Dr. Huang Fang-yen, chief executive of the medical team, the first words he spoke were, "You must remain calm." My wife is a clever person. She knew that something must be very wrong if the doctor was asking her to be calm. The next words he spoke were, "The president has been injured in the abdomen." Hearing this, my wife first became quiet and then very calm. Her intuition told her that since the president was hurt in the abdomen, there would be profuse bleeding, and major surgery would be required. She thought of not only of my safety; she thought also of the overall institution of the nation, and that at this time the vice president must be notified quickly to assume an interim role. This was how my wife handled the situation in that first moment. That there are really people who are skeptical about the truth of this shooting incident, I can understand, especially at a time when the campaign had reached fever pitch. With so many different reservations about it, I can sympathize. In reality, nobody is more anxious

than the vice president and I. We are the ones who were shot. We are hoping to find the answer so that we can reassure ourselves and reassure the people. We hope that this case can be solved quickly. I would not object to many experts, including Dr. Henry Lee, and as many people as the opposition camp suggests, participating in the investigation. I would welcome them more than anyone else would.

After that, on March 20 when the ballots were counted, I am sure that everyone was experiencing very complex emotions. Even though I was absolutely confident of my final victory in this election, I am not an absolute optimist. I dared not relax. During the counting of the ballots, my family and I watched the process on television. Most television stations were already reporting that our side had lost by 200,000 votes, and in some cases even 300,000 votes. At that time, I had already begun to prepare myself for defeat. How would I explain to everyone? How would I comfort my supporters? Because I knew that the feeling of defeat is terrible to bear. I had lost two elections, that for Tainan County magistrate and the other, in particular, my bid for a second term as Taipei mayor. In that election in 1998, I never imagined that I would lose my bid for reelection. I was full of confidence, because our ratings for administrative efficiency were so high, and the public opinion that we conducted said it would be impossible to lose. Yet in the end I lost. Later, to encourage my supporters, I quoted a famous expression from Winston Churchill: "A great city is known for the people's cruelty to their leader." At that time, everyone wept, and in fact I cried, too, though I kept the tears to myself. I know that when I stand before the public, I must be stronger than anyone else. I asked the people to go home, and thus the Taipei mayoral election ended in peace. I can understand perfectly, and I can sympathize, as I have experienced two losses myself. The principals and supporters are unable to accept the results of an election at that very moment. We must take a gentle approach in handling the situation. We cannot agitate. We must approach this situation with compassion and tolerance.

I have especially noticed that some people are saying that I am a ballot-rigging president. For me, this is the greatest insult to my integrity. Not only am I not capable of ballot fraud, but nor is my administration capable of ballot fraud. This includes the 200,000 or so persons handling electoral matters, who also could not have cheated. I am extremely sad to hear that people have doubts about me, or have even gone so far as to assert that I am a ballot-rigging president. The weight of such accusation is almost too great to bear.

On the morning of March 21, 2004, I telephoned my staff and told them to instruct

relevant agencies to study whether there could be a political solution to the controversy. They later told me there would be a number of difficulties. Firstly, the Central Election Commission had already been cited as the defendant, had come under suspicion, and was not considered trustworthy. In this situation, political resolution of the issue by means of an administrative ballot recount seemed infeasible. Secondly, the Presidential and Vice Presidential Election and Recall Act stipulates that, apart from prosecutors and judges who may undertake the ballot recount, others such as the Central Election Commission themselves and the administrative agencies do not have the right to conduct any vote recount. Under such conditions, they told me, it would be difficult for the Central Election Commission to initiate a recount. Furthermore, with the lawsuit having been already filed with the court, and the court having immediately sealed all the ballot boxes to preserve the evidence, the case has entered the judicial process, and the operation of the judicial system cannot be interfered with.

In my heart, however, I would like to speed up the ballot recount. I am not afraid of a ballot recount or ballot inspection, as I know that I did not commit ballot fraud. The administrative agencies and their relevant researches all report the above-mentioned difficulties, however. As president and as a presidential candidate, I too am very anxious and hope that the recount can begin as soon as possible so as to confirm whether or not there was any ballot fraud, and whether or not there is any problem concerning those invalid ballots.

Concerning the national security mechanism, the March 19 shooting for some unknown reason of the presidential and vice presidential candidates, who are also the incumbent president and vice president, was an important matter for the international community. I therefore invited leaders of national security agencies to exchange ideas for appropriate response and timely preparation. Today this has been misinterpreted as a denial of the right to vote affecting many people. It is very clear, however, who can and cannot vote, and who has or does not have to be garrisoned, as well as who should or should not take military responsibility. We had a prepared set of mechanisms. This was not the first but the third election of a president in Taiwan. Nothing about this mechanism has been changed, and the least number was garrisoned. There are always some people who cannot cast their vote, but this number has already decreased to, I think, only 12,000 or 13,000. This has been portrayed as a prohibition on the right to vote due to initiation of the national security mechanism, however, and this has been over-interpreted. But is this really so? That is something everyone should think about.

Some people have also asked why not stop the election. The Presidential and Vice Presidential Election and Recall Act passed by the Legislative Yuan is very clear that, except in the case of a candidate's death, the election should be held. This is prescribed very clearly in law. I share the same opinion with the President of the Legislative Yuan that the law is not sufficient in some respects, and that the law probably needs to be amended in order to conduct an immediate and full ballot recount. If the amended law is not retroactive, however, it will not be able to resolve the problem. That's why some people proposed that I issue an emergency decree. Nevertheless, I feel that according to the Additional Articles of the Constitution, an emergency decree may only be issued when a country suffers national crises like the earthquake of September 21, 1999. Since we hope that everything will return to normal as soon as possible, I am nervous that issuing an emergency decree would be a very serious matter, particularly since I am the suspected party in question. If I issue an emergency decree to investigate these two controversial events, would that not just make resolution of these problems even more complicated? These are factors that need to be considered. The problems still need to be solved, however, which is why I still have not given up seeking a political solution. Nor do I think that the problems cannot be solved. If all of us are willing to share responsibilities, if negotiations are conducted between the ruling and opposition parties, and if some amendments are made to the laws, then there should be no problem. So some people have said: If the issue gets stuck in the courts, then pursue an administrative ballot recount, and have the ruling and opposition parties negotiate a political solution so that everyone agrees to do it immediately. But if a lawsuit is filed it may become stuck in court, as the case would now be under the court's jurisdiction, and there might be this kind of difficulty. In response, some election officials have now suggested temporary withdrawal of the lawsuit to remove that obstacle. With this in mind, there are two means of resolution. The first is to seek a political solution through negotiation between the ruling and opposition parties, then everyone, including the Central Election Commission, can agree to commission the courts, which retain the people's trust, to assist in conducting the ballot recount. So this would be the same, with judges conducting the recount so long as everyone and the courts agree to this. The second means to resolve the problem is through amendment of that part of the law which prescribes that only prosecutors and judges can conduct ballot recounts. My opinion is that as long as the ballots can be examined as early, immediately, and completely as possible, I will support these solutions, and am optimistic, and hope we can all exercise our wisdom to consider whether this can be carried out.

I would like to propose four principles: listening, understanding, legality, and unity. We should listen to different opinions; listen to the opinions of our opponents. We should understand the feelings of the candidates who lost the election, and should especially understand the feelings of their supporters. Taiwan is a democratic country that abides by the rule of law, so pursuing and adhering to legal principle is very important. We cannot damage democracy and rule of law. We cannot tear apart or split Taiwan. We must unite the strengths of Taiwan's 23 million people so that society can be stable and the economy can continue to prosper. Therefore, I truly admire Mr. Lien Chan when he said he hoped everyone would remain calm and reasonable. Today it is the same, in the aftermath of the election staying calm and reasonable should be encouraged by all, irrespective of whether they are in the ruling or opposition party, whether on the winning or losing side. As for the result of any recount, I want to say here and now that I will fully accept it, whatever the result. I also hope that Messrs. Lien and Soong in the opposition camp can also accept the result of the recount, and will not say that the result of the recount has produced other problems, and so on without end. Of course, what concerns me most are the crowds outside the Office of the President. Bearing in mind the effects on the order of the whole of society, on economic prosperity, and on the country's rule of law, is it appropriate that such illegal gatherings are allowed to be continued. Since it was Messrs. Lien and Soong who brought these crowds here, they have the corresponding duty and responsibility to call on everyone to return to normality, to return to their places of work. This is my heartfelt appeal.

Guests attending the reception with the President and Vice President this morning included Premier Yu Shyi-kun, President of the Legislative Yuan Wang Jin-pyng, President of the Judicial Yuan Weng Yueh-sheng, President of the Examination Yuan Yao Chia-wen, President of the Control Yuan Fredrick Chien, and Secretary-General to the President Chiou I-jen.