

By BHONG SIMBAJON

Former three-term mayor and now District 1 House Representative Celso Lobregat reacted to a City Hall statement for the conduct of a back-track investigation with regard to the presence of illegal settlers inside the old public market that was hit by fire last Saturday.

Mayor Beng Climaco-Salazar told newsmen last Monday that in the process of the ongoing investigation being conducted by the city legal office probe team, they will also consider investigating the management of the said public market since the time of the late Mayor Vitaliano Agan, Ma. Clara Lobregat and Celso Lobregat.

In an interview with RMN Zamboanga, Congressman Lobregat said that he was not supposed to interfere with the affairs of the local chief executive, but since his name was dragged into the issue, he has to react and give his side on the said controversy.

Lobregat said that he is willing to submit himself for investigation if necessary, but the present administration has yet to police its own rank and should look into those government employees involved in the public market operations from top to bottom and determine their respective liabilities on the presence of occupants living inside the market premises despite the fact it is not allowed by law, before they point fingers and get involved former officials of the city.

“Pobre man si Mayor Agan, muerto ya hay incluji pa sila na investigasyon, the investigation should focus on the culpability of the present officials, not the previous ones,” Lobregat said.

In due fairness to the late mayor, Lobregat said that Agan was then the subject of criticisms for the illegal peddlers in the market when he attempted to destroy the so called “shadow government” inside just to restore orderliness inside and make sure that the legitimate government is on top of the situation.

“Do we have to revive the dead just to get through with the investigation? The problem is now,

cuando ya muri estos kinse persona tiempo ba de Mayor Agan?" Lobregat said.

The solon added that records will speak for itself, even the Google search engine online would reveal what his past administration has done to restore order and clean-up at the waterfront market.

"If we recall, I even earned the ire of those market stall owners and they even went to the extent of going on protest because of the strict implementation of the market ordinance during my time as mayor. The former City Administrator Antonio Orendain, Jr can attest to that because he is in the frontline at the market," Lobregat said.

He also defended her mother who was during her time as three term mayor made all possibilities of cleaning the mess at old public market. He said that her mother went to the extent of conceptualizing the "Bagsakan Center" in Sta. Cruz just to relocate those vendors who jampacked the Magay arrea and use the streets of the public market as vending area for their goods from the farms.

During his time as mayor, Lobregat said he relocated the fish vendors to a better location, put up the Material Recovery Facility (MRF) in order for the garbage collectors of General Services Office to have an easy procedure in recycling the garbage from the market itself, instead of bringing their raw garbage to Sta. Cruz MRF or Lumbangan MRF before disposal.

"They should stop pointing fingers, why can't they admit to the people that there were lapses in the management of present officials manning the market, instead of putting the blame on other people and the former city chief executives, they must not be defensive," Lobregat said.

He said that if indeed the probe team will pursue their back-track investigation, they should include investigating former mayor Cesar Climaco where the problem might have started and not during the time of mayor Agan who is next to him.

"Investigation should center on the fire incident that happened last Saturday, not on what happened in the past," Lobregat said.

He suggested that in order not to have a “white wash” in the process of investigation, other government agencies should come in and also investigate like the NBI, DILG and even the Sangguniang Panlungsod in aid of legislation just to give justice to the 25 innocent victims who perished in the fire.

Meanwhile, the late mayor Agan’s son Councilor Rommel Agan declined to give comments with regards to the naming of his father to form part of the back track investigation to be conducted. He said there is no need to react saying that it is hard to prove or disprove that allegations. –  
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