

Nearly three months after the Act on Promoting Transitional Justice (促進轉型正義法) cleared the legislative floor, the line-up of a nine-member transitional justice promotional committee is finally taking form.

On Tuesday, Premier William Lai (賴清德) nominated former Control Yuan member Huang Huang-hsiung (黃煌煥) as chairman of the committee, which is charged with several grand missions, including opening up political archives, removing authoritarian symbols, preserving historical sites of injustice and redressing past miscarriages of justice.

The public's immediate reaction to Huang's nomination was generally welcoming. Huang, 74, is dedicated to researching the nation's authoritarian past, including the 228 Incident and the Chinese Nationalist Party's (KMT) assets.

A major reason his nomination did not spark a knee-jerk objection from the KMT is likely because he is said to be one of the few public figures that both the pan-blue and pan-green camps can "tolerate."

Huang's cross-party support can be seen in his service as a Control Yuan member under former presidents Lee Teng-hui (李登輝) and Ma Ying-jeou (馬英九) of the KMT, despite him being a Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) member.

Former president Chen Shui-bian (陳水扁) of the DPP also nominated Huang for a seat on the government watchdog in 2004, although Chen's list of nominees was rejected by the then-KMT dominated legislature.

Unlike the Cabinet's Ill-gotten Party Assets Settlement Committee, which was formed in August 2016, nomination of members of the transitional justice promotional committee has to be vetted by lawmakers.

Despite the DPP enjoying a legislative majority, what the government does not need is to stir

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up too much controversy over its nominees for a committee tasked with dealing with a highly sensitive political issue before it even begins operation.

That might be why President Tsai Ing-wen's (蔡英文) administration has apparently tried to avoid appointing someone who might be immediately labeled as a "green thug," such as the assets committee's first chairman, Financial Supervisory Commission Chairman Wellington Koo (辜振甫), a vocal former DPP lawmaker.

Another dilemma for Lai might be whether to nominate someone who has ties to the KMT.

Doing so could be a double-edged sword. On the one hand, the transitional justice promotional committee as a whole might appear to be less politically biased, but on the other hand, its determination to rid the nation of authoritarian remnants and achieve long-overdue transitional justice could repeatedly be called into question, if it strikes people as being too lenient on certain issues.

However, these are simply immediate roadblocks. The real challenges will not begin until after the new committee makes its first strike.

If the assets committee's experience dealing with KMT-affiliates and suspected ill-gotten assets is any indication, no target is easy to defang and often leads to an all-out war between the government and the targeted establishments.

Ill-gotten party assets constitute only one aspect of the transitional justice promotional committee's mission. That means there are bound to be countless ugly wars of resistance.

However, those are inevitable battles that the nation has to go through to bring itself closer to being a fully democratized nation. They would also be a test on how serious the DPP administration is about bringing about transitional justice and whether it is willing to achieve the goal at the expense of temporary dips in its popularity ratings.

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