

Judge questions Ma's reported criticism

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Shilin District Court Judge Hung Ying-hua (洪英華), who has been critical of procedural aspects of former president Chen Shui-bian's (陳水扁) corruption trial, yesterday expressed regret over President Ma Ying-jeou's (馬英九) reported dismissal of her criticism as a violation of legal ethics.

Hung was responding to media reports that quoted Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) Legislator Chiu Yi (邱毅) relaying comments Ma had reportedly made during a dinner with KMT lawmakers on Wednesday night.

"I hope President Ma can clarify [what he said]," Hung said. "If President Ma does not issue a clarification, I will reserve my right to pursue legal action."

In December, a panel of judges ordered that Judge Chou Chan-chun (周昌春) be replaced by Judge Tsai Shou-hsun (蔡守訓) in the corruption and money laundering trial of the former president and 12 co-defendants. The switch elicited speculation that the decision was procedurally flawed and politically motivated.

In articles published in local media, Hung has said that the switching of judges was illegal, rendering the guilty verdicts Tsai handed down on Friday invalid.

Some KMT lawmakers have described Hung's comments and criticism of the Chen case as "audacious."

In response to Hung's criticism, the Judicial Yuan said yesterday that judges should be careful what they say.

Minister of Justice Wang -Ching-feng (王政銘) said she respected Hung's right to freedom of speech, but that it was up to the Judicial Yuan to decide whether her outspokenness was appropriate.

Asked for comment, Judicial Yuan Secretary-General Hsieh Wen-ting (謝文庭) did not give a direct answer.

However, Hsieh said that according to the Model Code of Judicial Conduct, which all judges in the country must adhere to, a judge should have high moral standards, be prudent in speech and action, and exercise self-control and integrity.

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