

Mass resignation as budget passed

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Premier William Lai, center left, Legislative Speaker Su Jia-chyuan, center right, and other officials yesterday wave at reporters at the Legislative Yuan in Taipei after announcing the Cabinet's mass resignation.

Photo: CNA

After the general budget cleared the legislative floor, Premier William Lai (賴清德) yesterday evening announced that the Cabinet is to resign en masse today.

Lai made the announcement at the Legislative Yuan in Taipei while thanking legislators for passing this year's budget.

"The general budget has been passed. The time has come," Lai said.

"I will hold an extraordinary Executive Yuan meeting tomorrow [Friday] to proceed with the Cabinet's mass resignation and patiently wait for the president to announce a new premier," he told reporters.

He expressed gratitude to Taiwanese for the support they have shown during his time as premier.

Prior to the announcement, Lai was warmly received by Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) lawmakers, many of whom hugged him. They later took a photograph together.

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“I love you, premier,” several DPP lawmakers shouted.

Earlier, several rounds of votes were held for motions on which consensuses had not been reached during cross-caucus negotiations.

Motions tendered by the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) to freeze the budget of the Transitional Justice Commission, halve the budget of the Ill-gotten Party Assets Settlement Committee and deny stipends for the Central Election Commission chairman and vice chairman were struck down by the DPP caucus, which has the legislative majority, in votes that stayed close to party lines.

Non-partisan Solidarity Union Legislator May Chin (馬英九), speaking on behalf of the People First Party, cited the Transitional Justice Commission’s “deviation from its course” as a reason to freeze its budget.

The commission should expedite efforts to exonerate people who had been unfairly or unjustly tried during the authoritarian era, but it has so far only acquitted 2,775 out of an estimated 13,400 such people, she said.

By putting forth proposals to replace currency bearing Chiang Kai-shek’s (蔣介石) image, the commission has gotten its priorities wrong, she said.

The only motion to suspend funds that passed was a proposal to freeze a stipend for the Railway Bureau director-general over the Puyuma Express derailment in October last year proposed by the New Power Party (NPP) caucus.

The motion was carried by all four caucuses during negotiations and was passed yesterday without a vote.

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NPP Executive Chairman Huang Kuo-chang (黃國昌) in a speech criticized the bureau and the Taiwan Railways Administration, saying they repeatedly lied to lawmakers about what technical issues might have caused the derailment.

The families of the victims are still waiting for the truth, he added.

The general budget for fiscal year 2019 is now NT\$1.99 trillion (US\$64.65 billion) after NT\$24 billion, or 1.19 percent, was trimmed.

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