

Tsai enters DPP primary race

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President Tsai Ing-wen yesterday in Taipei registers as a candidate for the party's primary for next year's presidential election.

Photo: Peter Lo, Taipei Times

President Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文) yesterday registered as a candidate in the Democratic Progressive Party's (DPP) presidential primary, saying that Taiwan and the party need her.

Tsai said that she is seeking re-election because she believes the DPP and Taiwan need her, not "despite Beijing's opposition," as her critics have said.

She made the remarks to reporters at the party's headquarters in Taipei hours before she departed for an eight-day state visit to Palau, Nauru and the Marshall Islands.

Tsai, who stepped down as DPP chairperson on election night last year after the party's losses in the Nov. 24 local elections, said she believes a candidate must fulfill three requirements to become president:

First, the candidate must be familiar with international affairs and capable of dealing with different groups, politicians and representatives, she said.

Taiwan faces external threats and pressure, as well as challenges from within, so it must strengthen its connection with the international community and with nations that share similar values, she said.

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Second, the candidate must be able to withstand pressure and criticism as they tackle problems that those in power have avoided for too long, she said.

Those in power need to take up the responsibility of handling problems that have prevented society from progressing, Tsai said, adding that many people would oppose the changes caused by reform, but the president must let neither praise nor criticism affect them.

Third, a president must be “not only a star player ... but also a good captain,” and deal with even the most ordinary of tasks, she said.

Taiwan needs a candidate who can unite the DPP, as well as like-minded groups in society, she said.

Tsai said she believes she fulfills all three requirements.

Former premier William Lai (賴清德), who on Monday entered the DPP race, said on Wednesday that he would suspend campaign activities until Tsai returns from her trip on Thursday next week.

Tsai said that while she appreciates Lai's intention, it is unnecessary.

Since the primary process is short, Lai should use the time to communicate with the public about why he is running, she said.

Tsai also said it was too early to discuss the possibility of her and Lai running on the same ticket as president and vice president.

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Asked whether she would support Lai if he wins the primary, Tsai said that her focus at the moment is on winning.

The DPP is expected to nominate a presidential candidate by middle of next month, DPP Chairman Cho Jung-tai (卓榮泰) said.

The Central Election Commission on Tuesday announced that the presidential and legislative elections are to be held on Jan. 11 next year.

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