

## Lessons learnt as siege ends

Written by Taipei Times Editorial  
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The student-led Sunflower movement's occupation of the legislative chamber is set to end peacefully this evening. The fact that an almost revolutionary campaign is to end peacefully and without bloodshed is a sign of the maturity and rationality of Taiwan's democracy.

The campaign may have ended, but Minister of Justice Luo Ying-shay (呂英祥) has said that the students' occupation of the legislative chamber and the Executive Yuan were illegal and must be investigated. The students knew that they were breaking the law and they are not trying to evade legal accountability.

As the government deals with the legal aspect, it must remember that the movement is widely supported. Although the movement has broken the law, it did so reasonably and legitimately.

It is a delicate issue and the government must not go into score-settling mode by widening its scope and arbitrarily targeting large numbers of protesters. Doing so would only result in further social conflict.

Student leaders Chen Wei-ting (陳偉霆) and Lin Fei-fan (林飛帆) are being investigated on eight and 10 possible charges respectively, and might face prison sentences. Hopefully, prosecutors will decide that the complaints are minor and do not warrant indictments.

When issuing verdicts, judges should consider not-guilty verdicts, probation, the possibility to commute verdicts to fines and social work.

Imprisonment for political reasons will only provoke further public outrage. It can only be hoped that the judiciary will consider social perceptions as well as the rule of law.

When the legislature resumes operations, lawmakers must remember that the protests were sparked by legislative misconduct, and that it was a lack of sincerity and an inability to respect the procedural agenda that made it possible to decide that the review of the cross-strait service trade agreement was completed after 30 seconds of chaos.

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When the legislature returns to normal, legislators must not forget that President Ma Ying-jeou (馬英九) and Legislative Speaker Wang Jin-pyng (王金平) have promised to pass legislation regulating the oversight of cross-strait deals before the service trade agreement is reviewed and to quickly review the oversight legislation before turning to a clause-by-clause analysis of the agreement.

Legislators must behave like adults and prove that they can hold a proper meeting instead of occupying the speaker's podium or resorting to the use of hidden microphones. They must be able to seriously and earnestly debate the pros and cons of the agreement.

The government's signing of the trade agreement without first soliciting the opinion of business and industry has been criticized as being opaque.

The lack of communication with the legislature and the public after the signing is what triggered the civil unrest and backlash.

The government has been too passive and conservative in its handling of the movement's concerns and doubts over the negative effects of the agreement, as well as generational concerns, the issues of complimentary measures and of political and economic strategy.

The government has been unable to dispel doubt, and this has created a lopsided public policy debate.

The March 30 protest, which drew hundreds of thousands of people, should make the government understand that anything it does will be judged indirectly by public opinion in the legislature and directly by public opinion through oversight.

The drafting of public policy must be careful, meticulous and transparent, and it must take the opinions of all sectors of society into consideration. Although this may result in a more complex and time-consuming debate, the result will be that policies and agreements will not be rejected by the legislature and the public.

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