

## DPP chair accuses KMT of opaqueness

Written by Taipei Times  
Monday, 12 July 2010 07:08 -

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Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) Chairperson Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文) yesterday accused the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) of failing to open its negotiations with China to public scrutiny.

“There have been many areas in which the KMT government hasn’t been transparent when dealing with cross-strait issues,” Tsai said during a campaign stop in Taipei City.

“The part we are most concerned about is that we don’t know what messages or words are being exchanged between [the KMT] and China,” she said.

Tsai’s remarks on the KMT’s unofficial cross-strait exchanges reflected growing dissatisfaction by the opposition party, which said the channels of communication should instead be conducted on a government-to-government basis.

Speaking earlier, DPP spokesperson Tsai Chi-chang (蔡智昌) said the talks served as a front for secret political exchanges, adding that they were part of an effort that could lead to cross-strait unification.

He said that while the opposition party wasn’t against holding dialogue with China, they should be conducted under “a framework that is accountable to the public.”

Their comments came in the wake of a KMT-Chinese Communist Party (CPP) forum held in Guangzhou, China, on Friday and Saturday. Hundreds of delegates attended the event, including a number of senior KMT officials.

The forum was initiated by former KMT chairman Lien Chan (連戰) during a ground-breaking visit to China in 2005. Since then, it has been widely seen as a major communications platform between the two parties.

Former KMT chairman Wu Poh-hsiung (吳伯雄), who led the KMT delegation at the forum, will meet Chinese President Hu Jintao (胡錦濤) today to discuss the Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement (ECFA), which was signed on June 29 in Chongqing, China.

The two are expected to discuss the timetable for implementation of the ECFA.

Wu is also expected to pass to Hu a 16-character message from President Ma Ying-jeou (馬英九).

Translated into English, the message reads: “Face the realities, build mutual trust, seek consensus despite differences and create win-win results.”

Ma yesterday confirmed that he had asked Wu to communicate that message to the Chinese leader.

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Given that there are a lot of things to do in the wake of the ECFA signing, Ma said he hoped the two sides would forge ahead “shoulder-to-shoulder” based on those.

During a gathering with representatives from Tainan’s business and agricultural sectors, Ma said the ECFA — under which zero tariffs, deregulation and greater market access were expected to give Taiwanese businesses an edge in China — could prevent Taiwan from being “further marginalized” economically in the Asia-Pacific region, help globalize Taiwan’s trade and economy and enhance the institutionalization of cross-strait business and trade.

He said that after the ECFA takes effect on Jan. 1 next year, 60,000 jobs are expected to be created in Taiwan. In Tainan alone, about 1,400 companies of the 8,000 firms in operation there are expected to benefit from the trade pact. The beneficiaries would include manufacturers of TFT-LCD flat panels, textiles and auto parts and components, as well as farmers and aquaculture operators, he said.

Meanwhile, Presidential Office Spokesman Lo Chih-chiang (羅智強) said Ma had urged the DPP to return to the provisional legislative session to review the ECFA and fulfill its duty to oversee the government.

“As the nation’s largest opposition party, the DPP should not give up its responsibility to monitor the government,” Lo quoted Ma as saying.

The DPP on Friday withdrew from the session after the legislature ruled to allow the agreement to skip a committee review.

The KMT said it would push the ECFA through a one-month negotiation period without a committee review and thereby prevent the DPP caucus from filing a reconsideration proposal.

Ma said the DPP, which held a large rally two weeks ago to oppose the ECFA, should stand by its principles and veto the ECFA as a pact in the legislature rather than walk out.

“Walking out of the provisional meeting and giving up on review of the ECFA is turning your back on supporters,” Ma said.

KMT spokesman Su Jun-pin (蘇俊平) accused the DPP of “speaking one way and acting another,” saying that while the party blasted the KMT for not making the ECFA transparent, it was unwilling to carry out its supervisory duties at the Legislative Yuan.

In response, Tsai said the party had no choice but to walk out.

“Only through open committee scrutiny can the crucial cross-strait trade pact be overseen efficiently by the legislature,” she said.

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“The forced second review, which stripped the legislature of its oversight power, has once again underscored the fact that a lot of things are opaque under the KMT regime, and even the negotiations between the KMT and DPP lawmakers are impenetrable,” she said.

Last night, Tsai Chi-chang said the opposition would continue to refuse to endorse the legislature’s review of the ECFA.

“The KMT hasn’t given opposition parties room for rational debate,” he said. “The DPP doesn’t want to back a legislature that is autocratic.”

He said the KMT-controlled legislature’s decision to vote on the agreement in a package vote, instead of a clause-by-clause ballot, ran against legislative precedent and “democratic values.”

The KMT is trying to use its three-fourths majority in the legislature to run roughshod over public concerns that the ECFA could have a dramatic impact on Taiwan’s industries and widen the income gap, Tsai Chi-chang said.

Meanwhile, KMT caucus whip Lin Yi-shih (林益世) said the caucus did not have any plans to invite Premier Wu Den-yih (吳登毅) to brief the legislature on the ECFA during the second provisional legislative session that may be held next month, though such an arrangement could be made.

The KMT resolved not to invite the premier to report on the ECFA after KMT and DPP legislators brawled at the legislature on Thursday.

However, KMT Legislator Wu Yu-sheng (吳育生) supported inviting the premier “as long as the DPP can promise not to pick a fight [with KMT], to cause trouble or to paralyze the plenary session again.”

In related news, Lin said the KMT caucus would form a consensus within the party regarding how to amend a number of bills the KMT would like to pass before the extra legislative session ends on Wednesday.

The bills on the KMT’s agenda include amendments to the Civil Service Employment Act (公務員任用法), the Civil Servant Retirement Act (公務員退休法), the Civil Service Survivor Relief Act (公務員遺屬救濟法), the Disaster Prevention and Protection Act (災害防救法), the National Health Insurance Act (全民健康保險法) and a draft law on farm village rejuvenation

“We cannot reach any cross-party negotiation conclusions without the DPP’s participation in the extra session so we have to discuss the bills [within the KMT] article-by-article [before pushing through the bills],” Lin said.

Source: [Taipei Times - 2010/07/12](#)

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