

Wang vows monitoring law before pact

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Legislative Speaker Wang Jin-pyng, center, greets protesters while visiting the Legislative Yuan with lawmakers from both the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) and Democratic Progressive Party in Taipei yesterday.

Photo: Pichi Chuang, Reuters

Legislative Speaker Wang Jin-pyng (王金平) promised yesterday to enact a law monitoring Taiwan's pacts with China before the legislature reviews the controversial cross-strait service trade agreement.

The move was welcomed by the student activists, but they have yet to decide whether to withdraw from the legislative compound.

Wang made the announcement during a high-profile visit to the student protesters on the occupied legislative chamber, but prior to entering the room, he held a press conference saying that he has never shunned the responsibility for mediating the conflicts between the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) and Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) over the pact's handling.

He expressed regret and concern that the attempts to solve the dispute by having the KMT secretary-general and DPP convener communicate face-to-face and by holding six cross-party negotiations have all failed to reach consensus.

"The legislature is the sanctuary of democracy, not because of its grandiose architecture, but because it can reflect the people's voice. The appropriateness of the means the students have employed to reach their ends is open to discussion, but what they are doing is making people reflect upon democracy," he said.

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“I’m hesitant to criticize the students’ aspirations to widen civic participation, but I also hope to caution them that long-term occupation of the legislature has halted the review of bills that could have an impact on people’s livelihood,” he said.

“I call on the students to go back to where you belong and enrich yourself and continue to display conviction, tenderness, rationality and peace to make the world respect our democracy,” Wang added.

Wang said he “would not convene [another] inter-party negotiation about the cross-strait service trade agreement until the draft of cross-strait agreements oversight mechanism has been legislated.”

He said “the country’s development and stability turns on the ruling party’s tolerance and forbearance, the opposition party’s wisdom and the people’s support” and that “we will learn lessons and better observe public opinion in future national policy promotion and implementation.”

Wang concluded his talk by saying that he hopes the dispute can end peacefully and calling out “Taiwan, jia you [加油, an expression of encouragement]!” several times.

Wang then walked into the chamber and shook hands with several students while student leader Lin Fei-fan (林飛帆) said Wang’s comment showed that the protest has achieved preliminary results.

Wang left the legislature without making a public speech.

DPP caucus whip Ker Chien-ming (柯建銘), who accompanied Wang during his press conference and visit, said that Wang would not initiate the review of the service trade pact until the legislation of a cross-strait agreement oversight mechanism has been accomplished.

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The students welcomed the comments, but said any withdrawal from the compound would require further discussion with Sunflower movement participants.

“We welcome the response that Wang has made to our demands during a brief stay at the Legislative Yuan at 11am this morning,” student leader Chen Wei-ting (陳偉霆) told a crowd yesterday afternoon rallying outside the legislature. “The most important part of his remarks is that he promised that he would not call a cross-party negotiation on [reviewing] the cross-strait service trade agreement before passing a legislation to monitor cross-strait agreements.”

Chen said that as the KMT could not reach an agreement with opposition parties on reviewing the cross-strait trade pact, “when Wang said that he would not call a cross-party negotiation before adopting the monitoring bill means that, in fact, he is positively responding to our demand to pass the legislation before reviewing the trade pact.”

Chen then urged all lawmakers regardless of their party affiliation to work with Wang to independently advance the monitoring mechanism.

“This breakthrough is all because of the efforts that Taiwan’s civil society has made in the past three weeks. We would like to pay our highest respect to all those who have either actively participated, or expressed your support in different ways,” Chen said, bowing to the crowd with several student leaders, including Lin.

“We have gone through many things that made us feel powerless, we have been saddened by tears and bloodshed,” Lin said. “But today, we can proudly say that we are finally seeing the break of dawn in this nation.”

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