

## ‘Caretaker’ not in my dictionary: Ma

Written by Taipei Times

Friday, 22 January 2016 08:01 -

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President Ma Ying-jeou yesterday addresses a forum on Asian economic growth in Taipei.

**Photo: CNA**

President Ma Ying-jeou (馬英九) yesterday said that the word “caretaker” was not in his dictionary, brushing aside calls to leave important decisions to a new administration, while promising to forge ahead on several regional trade agreements.

Following the elections on Saturday last week, which saw the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) win the presidency and legislature in a landslide, DPP officials have called for Ma’s administration to serve as a caretaker government, deferring important decisions to president-elect Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文).

However, at an economic forum on Asian economic growth at the Grand Hyatt Taipei, Ma said that reviving economic growth and dealing with the slump in exports that followed the European debt crisis were global problems, while finding a new competitive edge for the economy was the inescapable responsibility of any Taiwanese leader.

At a time when the functionality of the WTO is declining and other nations are continually signing bilateral trade deals, Taiwan must follow the trend of the global economy, he said.

Economic integration is a new thing for Asia, he said, citing the conclusion of Trans-Pacific Partnership and Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership negotiations, along with the establishment of the ASEAN Economic Community last month.

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While Taiwan wants to participate in each of these agreements, accession is difficult not only economically, but also for many political reasons, he said, promising to continue pushing for the nation to be included over the remainder of his term.

“It is I ‘still’ have four months, not I ‘only’ have four months,” he said, referring to his term’s expiration on May 20.

“My dictionary does not have the words ‘caretaker’ or ‘slacker,’ in it,” he added.

Ma said that a peaceful political environment was a necessary condition of market stability, adding that no one should “rule out” deals with China because such a policy would be not only mistaken, but also potentially fatal for Taiwan.

The president said a peaceful environment was also a precondition for economic growth, adding that the so-called “1992 consensus” had served to make both sides of the Taiwan Strait peaceful and prosperous over the past eight years, a period that saw Taiwan achieve the warmest possible relations with both the US and China.

Cross-strait peace was hard-won and people should learn to treasure and work hard to preserve it, he said, in an apparent jab at Tsai.

The “1992 consensus” refers to a supposed tacit understanding between Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) and the Chinese Communist Party that there is “one China,” but both sides have different interpretations of what “China” means.

Additional reporting by Abraham Gerber

Source: [Taipei Times - 2016/01/22](#)