

Tsai to head judicial reform committee

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Presidential Office spokesman Alex Huang (黃煌煒) yesterday said that President Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文) would head a preparatory committee for national affairs conferences on judicial reform to be set up by the office, in an effort to prevent the pending nominations of the Judicial Yuan president and vice president from impeding long-awaited progress toward judicial reform.

“Actually, in addition to serving as convener, [Tsai] will also designate a civil opinion leader to be the deputy convener of the committee, which will consist of legal and non-legal professionals,” Huang said.

Huang said the committee is set to begin soliciting issues regarding judicial reform, including ones gathered by civil judicial reform groups.

The beginning of these efforts is meant to prevent any delay in the nomination of Judicial Yuan president and vice president from hindering judicial reforms, Huang said.

Huang made the remarks when asked to confirm media reports published yesterday that quoted an unnamed “high-level official at the Presidential Office” as saying that Tsai is to take the role of convener of the committee to ensure smooth communication between the Presidential Office-affiliated body and various sectors of society.

“While there have been concerns that a politician’s ties with the judicial system could lead to their interference in individual court cases, Tsai is confident that she would not do so and that her goal is simply to assist with reform efforts,” the official was quoted as saying.

According to the guidelines for establishment of the committee rolled out by the office on July 11, Tsai is responsible for appointing the convener and deputy convener of the committee, one of whose stated missions is to give counsel to the president on matters concerning judicial reform.

It was reported that initially, the convener seat was to be occupied by Presidential Office

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Secretary-General Lin Bih-jaw (林碧 Jaw).

Tsai's decision to take the role came one day after she signed off on Public Functionary Disciplinary Sanction Commission Chief Commissioner Hsieh Wen-ting's (謝文庭) and Judicial Yuan Secretary-General Lin Chin-fang's (林錦芳) withdrawals of their nominations as Judicial Yuan president and vice president respectively.

Their nominations met with harsh criticism, as Hsieh was purported to be a party to human rights violations during the Chinese Nationalist Party's (KMT) authoritarian era, while Lin allegedly has a history of intervening in the judicial process.

Regarding to Hsieh and Lin Chin-fang's replacements, Huang yesterday said that Tsai would nominate new candidates in accordance with the Constitution and would extensively solicit opinions from society.

"Since the incumbent Judicial Yuan president and vice president had already resigned early last month, the new candidates will be nominated as soon as possible," Huang said.

Huang added that since their nominations still require approval from the Legislative Yuan, the posts might not be filled until November.

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