

President denies that Lai is set to quit next month

Written by Taipei Times

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President Tsai Ing-wen speaks at a news conference in a hallway of the Presidential Office in Taipei yesterday.

Photo: CNA

President Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文) yesterday dismissed speculation that Premier William Lai (賴清德) would step down next month, saying that she believes that they would remain “close associates.”

Tsai made the remarks at a news conference held in a hallway of the Presidential Office.

While it was the first time the president addressed the media at the location, she said more “hallway chats” would be held.

Over the past several weeks, the Executive Yuan’s most important job has been to review the government’s work, and Lai and his team have been doing that, she said.

She has frequently met with Lai to discuss their views and feelings, and both agreed that “the current priority is to review the government’s work,” she said.

The two have been “close associates” for more than a year and she believes “it will remain that way,” Tsai said.

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Lai had offered to resign following the Democratic Progressive Party's (DPP) losses in the Nov. 24 elections, but was persuaded by the president to remain in his post.

The resignation rumor began after DPP Legislator Tuan Yi-kang (團逸康) said that the premier would step down after completing general budget bills for next year.

The DPP lost seven cities and counties in the elections, including Kaohsiung, which the party had governed for the past 20 years.

The DPP won 13 cities and counties in the 2014 elections.

Lai and Presidential Office Secretary-General Chen Chu (陳楚) are “not the kind of people obsessed with status,” Tsai said, adding that they are people who “know when to be humble and take responsibility.”

“The three of us have good interactions,” she said.

While there has been speculation over whether the party would collaborate with independent Taipei Mayor Ko Wen-je (柯文哲), Tsai said that the party's next challenge is to “garner the support of most of society.”

When the DPP was defeated in the 2008 elections, it made party members realize that infighting is not only unhelpful, but that it causes more problems, she said.

Following last month's elections, DPP members have had similar or different opinions on why the party suffered massive losses, she said.

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While some were more expressive, others have kept quiet, but all agree that solidarity should be prioritized, she said, adding that she is confident that the party can reorganize and tackle more challenges.

“In the face of difficulties, it is most important to stay united,” Tsai said.

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