

Ma still playing the blame game

Written by Taipei Times Editorial
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President Ma Ying-jeou (馬英九) is looking more and more like a Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) version of former president Chen Shui-bian (陳水扁). During the 2008 presidential campaign, Ma constantly criticized Chen for his feeble governing and for blaming every problem on 50 years of corrupt KMT rule. Now, when the Ma administration is critical of issues like the environmental assessment of the Central Taiwan Science Park and the dilapidated state of Taiwan Taoyuan International Airport, it resorts to blaming the Chen administration. How does this make Ma any different from Chen?

The development of the third stage of the Central Taiwan Science Park was approved by the DPP government, and at the time, the DPP was indeed guilty of making some mistakes. However, the protests against the science park development are not a recent phenomenon, they have been going on for some time. Local residents have repeatedly told the government and the media about how they have been treated unfairly and how the government has pushed for development without the legally required environmental impact assessment. They have made their point clear with protests at the park's Taichung branch, the park administration, the Environmental Protection Administration, the gate of the National Science Council and through the courts.

After two years of hard work by the residents, the media are finally taking notice, the courts have accepted their complaints and the government must now take their protests seriously. With the problem out in the open, the Ma administration chalks the issue up to a decision by the previous government. Is this really an acceptable excuse?

The Taiwan Taoyuan International Airport was one of former dictator Chiang Ching-kuo's (蔣經國) 10 infrastructure projects. It is 31 years old, dilapidated and ill-managed. Foreign visitors are fed up with it, and Taiwanese are embarrassed by it. Ma says the DPP should have taken better care of it. Is this really an acceptable excuse?

Renovating the airport would take about a year. If the KMT felt that the main gateway to Taiwan was an important issue, it could have begun renovations as soon as it regained power. If it had, renovations would have been completed by now. Problems like the poor and overpriced restaurants, broken baggage carts and clogged toilets are all a matter of management. To blame the previous government for these problems is a bit far-fetched.

The KMT has been in power for more than two years. Any national problems, regardless of how old, are now its responsibility. Many of the initiatives the DPP undertook while in office lacked public support, and they were voted out of office as a result. With the KMT back in power, the DPP has paid the price of its mistakes, and it should no longer be responsible for the nation's problems.

While Ma may have strengthened the fighting spirit of dark-blue supporters with his criticism of the DPP, a larger number of voters feel he has abandoned the presidential high ground. By

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fanning the political divide and sowing ethnic discord, the presidency has been lowered to the level of crass party politics.

It has become difficult to tell Ma apart from Chen. Ma is enamored of electioneering and politically motivated stunts. He will eventually become hostage to dark-blue interests and lose public support.

Can Ma differentiate himself from Chen? Well, he could always stop shifting responsibility and start admitting that his government could do better. He could also push for an immediate resolution of environmental and developmental issues and restore the airport to international standards. However, the answer to the question boils down this: Does Ma have the competence and conviction to change?

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