

Double standards of the judiciary

Written by Taipei Times Editorial
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One would think that the judiciary, having come under much criticism for a perceived lack of impartiality, would work to restore the public's dwindling confidence. However, it has continued to amaze the public with its blatant bias.

On Friday, Cho Po-chung (曹勝強), the younger brother of Changhua County Commissioner Cho Po-yuan (曹勝元), was charged with colluding with business groups to illegally pocket NT\$49 million (US\$1.6 million) in the county government's procurement of environmentally friendly shopping bags.

As the indictment also charged Cho Po-chung with embezzling NT\$24 million from President Ma Ying-jeou's (馬英九) presidential campaign office during last year's presidential election, suggesting that the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) might not have been honest in submitting its declaration of funds received during Ma's election campaign.

According to the report published by the Control Yuan in July last year, Ma and Vice President Wu Den-yih (吳登益) of the KMT received NT\$446 million in donations in the presidential election last year. The expenditure for the Ma-Wu ticket was NT\$444 million, with the final balance standing at NT\$2.2 million, the report said.

The Ma-Wu ticket won the election against then-Democratic Progressive Party presidential candidate Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文) and her running mate, Su Jia-chyuan (蘇嘉全), who declared with the Control Yuan that their fundraising campaign had raised NT\$756 million.

The Political Donations Act (政治獻金法) clearly stipulates that candidates are required to report all campaign spending.

However, Ying Pao-kuo (葉保國), the accountant of the Ma-Wu ticket's national campaign headquarters at the time, was quoted in Cho Po-chung's indictment as saying that "among the receipts filed by its Changhua campaign office, some, given their large amount, were not reported to the Control Yuan."

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The indictment said that 1,300 sets of plates were distributed as campaign memorabilia during the campaign period, each costing NT\$91 — an amount that runs against the Ministry of Justice's regulation that campaign paraphernalia cannot exceed a price tag of NT\$30. NT\$30 was also the standard by which the ministry dispatched prosecutors nationwide to probe for vote-buy allegations.

This seems to suggest that the Ma-Wu ticket's Changhua campaign office might have violated the Presidential and Vice Presidential Election and Recall Act (總統、副總統選舉及罷免法), yet the public has yet to hear from the Control Yuan or judicial agencies about probing the case involving Ma.

In contrast to the apparent inaction of the Supreme Prosecutors' Office Special Investigation Division (SID) and agencies to investigate the seeming inconsistencies, the public, meanwhile, is bewildered by the judiciary's skewed sense of justice after it was reported that three Taiwan Solidarity Union officials have been indicted for contempt of authority for calling the SID "SID pigs" during a protest in May last year.

These incidents give the public a pathetic impression. Prosecutors respond to criticism of negligence by charging the accusers with "contempt of authority," while not a word is uttered about clues that may lead to bigger cases involving the top echelon of the KMT.

This brazen double standard is downright despicable, and a growing number of Taiwanese fear that an Internet joke that "you will be all right [and avoid any judiciary prosecution] as long as you possess a KMT membership" may have started ringing true.

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