

No response to Ma's unmet promises

Written by Taipei Times Editorial
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President Ma Ying-jeou (馬英九) is doing it again: After his failure to deliver on his “6-3-3” campaign pledge — 6 percent annual GDP growth, an unemployment rate of less than 3 percent and US\$30,000 annual per capita income — his failure to donate half of his salary as he had said he would if he fell short of the “6-3-3” targets, his failure to seek compensation from Beijing for the damage caused to Taiwanese firms in 2008 over the imports of melamine-tainted milk products, and his broken promise of not doubling as president and Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) chairman, Ma is adding another item to his list of broken campaign pledges.

During the presidential campaign, Ma vowed that his administration would adhere to the “three limits, six noes” (三限六不) policy on Chinese students, banning them from receiving scholarships, taking off-campus work and taking tests for Republic of China (ROC) professional certificates.

However, shortly after securing re-election last year, he said his administration was planning to expand the number of Chinese universities accredited in Taiwan from 41 to 112, with Minister of Education Chiang Wei-ling (江宜陵) adding that the government would review the “three limits, six noes” policy.

Local media revealed yesterday that Chinese students have been listed among those who are eligible for this year's national technician certification exam.

Government officials, in response to media queries, insisted that allowing the Chinese students to sit the exam is different from qualifying them to receive ROC professional certificates and that the technician certificate is not a means to a work permit in Taiwan.

The explanation was anything but convincing, especially considering Ma's credibility and vacillating policies.

While a growing number of Taiwanese have become used to Ma reneging on campaign pledges, it is still shocking to see how brazenly he flip-flops.

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Ma's approval rating dipped to 9.2 percent and his credibility rating fell to less than 20 percent.

After having lost much of his credibility, the public perception is that he only pays lip service and people should not take his words to heart.

Earlier this week, Ma was criticized for making insensitive remarks during a meeting with university presidents at the National Conference of University and College Presidents held in Greater Tainan.

He urged the presidents to boldly carry out their plan to raise tuition fees and cited as an example his policy of increasing electricity and fuel prices that people, despite their grievances, "have now grown used to."

An individual's thinking can be revealed through their comments. It is dreadful to think that Ma, following the same logic as he did when he argued that the public is adapting to the policy, could be thinking: "People will get used to me not keeping my promises."

Over his past five years in office, Ma has managed to disappoint voters and has set a bad example by not making good on his promises.

This series of disappointments call for the one glaring but often unspoken question: Why are members of the public not angry at the president's frequently broken promises and lack of credibility?

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