

KMT has double standards

Written by Taipei Times Editorial
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In one swift move, the Chinese Nationalist Party's (KMT) Central Standing Committee on Wednesday approved a motion withdrawing its nomination of scandal-ridden Keelung Council Speaker Huang Ching-tai (黃景泰) as its candidate for the year-end Keelung mayoral election.

According to the motion tabled by Taipei Mayor and KMT Vice Chairman Hau Lung-bin (郝龍斌) and three other committee members, the party's image and reputation have been greatly tarnished as a result of the claims that Huang took bribes from a real-estate developer, adding that several polling agencies have also released figures indicating Huang's declining popularity among voters in the constituency.

The committee's decision to drop Huang's candidacy garnered praise from some KMT lawmakers, who said it was the right move, as it showed that the party takes Keelung residents' opinions seriously.

It is certainly comforting to see the governing party taking action to honor pledges made by President Ma Ying-jeou (馬英九), who, in his capacity as KMT chairman, has said that the party must make clean politics its most important core value to restore its image, and that it must remember the importance of integrity.

However, the question is whether the KMT possesses a genuine determination to uphold clean politics and integrity amid glaring double standards.

Taitung County Commissioner Justin Huang (黃景泰) of the KMT was indicted in August 2008 on charges of accepting more than NT\$2 million (US\$66,790) in bribes from two pharmaceutical companies in 2004 and 2005 during his previous legislative term. Legal proceedings are ongoing. Meanwhile, KMT Legislator Hsu Yao-chang (許耀章) in July last year was sentenced to nine years jail in his first trial for receiving bribes of NT\$12 million.

Despite the indictment and court sentence, both Justin Huang and Hsu have the KMT's blessing to run in the year-end Taitung and Miaoli county commissioner elections under the KMT banner.

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So why is the party's anti-corruption standard different when it comes to Huang Ching-tai, who has not yet been indicted, but whose case is still under investigation?

If anything, the striking disparity between the treatment received by the pair and Huang Ching-tai only goes to illustrate the KMT's lack of sincerity in its anti-corruption policies.

It is no wonder then that Huang Ching-tai yesterday announced, in defiance of the KMT Central Committee's decision to replace him in the election, his determination to run as an independent.

Among other issues cited against Huang Ching-tai in the motion was his slipping public support. Pointing to media polls that showed him with a mere 18 percent support, the party said there are concerns that his low support may negatively impact on campaigns not only in Keelung, but in Taipei and New Taipei City.

Should that argument stand, one cannot help but wonder what the party is to do with its chairman, whose approval rate, according to media polls, is only half that of Huang Ching-tai's.

As such, should a double standard apply to Ma, or, as Ma often claims the moral high ground — ought he to be held to a higher standard?

As KMT chairman, Ma is naturally charged with campaigning for candidates nominated by the party. However, the effectiveness of his campaign efforts for his party's candidates is doubtful when his own approval ratings have plummeted to as low as 9.2 percent.

Whoever the KMT decides to nominate is its own business, but one thing is certain: Thanks to the latest episode involving Huang Ching-tai, the public is again witnessing how the party is interested only in political calculation under the pretense of building clean politics.

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