

On Monday last week, university students in Hong Kong launched a one-week boycott of classes in protest of Beijing's refusal to allow fully democratic elections in the territory.

While the Chinese government claims that it will not be shaken and although it has been getting its lackeys in Hong Kong to use all sorts of threats, 13,000 people still took part in a rally to launch the strike. This number was more than originally expected, with even high-school students joining in, making this the biggest boycott of classes that Hong Kong has ever witnessed.

Beijing presents a tough exterior, but internally it lacks confidence. On the day the boycott began, Chinese President Xi Jinping (习近平) met with members of Hong Kong's elite, including tycoon Li Ka-shing (李嘉诚), who is said to be Asia's richest man. In the meeting, Xi emphasized once again that any future Hong Kong chief executive had to be a Chinese patriot who had the trust of the Chinese Communist Party.

Xi also made the obviously false claim that China's policies for Hong Kong have not changed and will not change.

Xi's remarks were a new tactic aimed at tricking Hong Kongers after a series of tougher policies had failed. Xi's main aim was to put the minds of Hong Kong's elite at rest regarding Hong Kong Chief Executive Leung Chun-ying's (梁振英) efforts to attract more Chinese investment to the territory.

Beijing's highest authority for dealing with Hong Kong affairs is its Hong Kong and Macau work coordination group, which oversees the work of the Hong Kong and Macau Affairs Office. The group is headed by Zhang Dejiang (张德江), who also heads the National People's Congress Standing Committee. Xi's decision to meet with members of Hong Kong's elite in person suggests that he is unsatisfied with Zhang's performance.

The significance of the boycotts is now much greater than a mere protest against Beijing. Looking at recent political developments in Hong Kong, it is evident that many of the older members of the pan-democracy camp believe the "democratic return" of Hong Kong is dead.

Younger generations are demanding the right to decide their own fate, which Beijing has criticized as “Hong Kong independence.”

In fact “self-determination” can lead to union or independence, as illustrated by the recent referendum in Scotland.

As for the future of Hong Kong, it is of course Beijing’s policies that will determine whether the territory will move toward unification or greater independence.

This is also a key point in time for Taiwan, where the Nov. 29 nine-in-one elections will impact greatly on the 2016 presidential vote. This is especially true of the Taipei mayoral election, which will be a battle between the nation’s new civic powers and members of the old, China-friendly, pro-big-business elite. It will test whether Taiwanese have transcended pan-blue and pan-green party lines and awoken to their rights and duties in civic society, or whether they remain willing to be robbed and controlled by cheats.

When it comes to the Taipei mayoral election, independent candidate Ko Wen-je (柯文哲) is breaking away from traditional election practices. He has not only made his personal wealth, assets and campaign fees public, but is also not spending money on campaign flags or advertisements, and does not plan to hold any campaign rallies.

Transparency is the most important thing, for this is the only way to stop “black gold” — or dirty money — from influencing elections and manipulating politics. On the surface, the elections are democratic, but in reality black gold is heavily involved, distorting the true essence of democracy.

Can voters really believe the expenses that President Ma Ying-jeou (馬英九) declared in his presidential campaigns? Can they believe the figures the Judicial Yuan and the Control Yuan have provided about the wealth of Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) Taipei mayoral candidate Sean Lien (連戰) and his family?

HK, Ko offer hope for democracy

Written by Paul Lin 林

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Faced with an untrustworthy Judicial Yuan and Control Yuan, society really needs to stand up and show its power.

If Ko's new way of doing things can gain the support of voters, he will bring a new dynamic to the nation's elections, and this will start a new chapter in Taiwanese democracy and politics.

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