

Many have been hopeful that Taiwan's democratization, touted as a success story, would lead the nation toward the maturation of its democracy every step of the way, with every election freer and fairer than the previous ones as the state protects democratic values by upholding the principle of administrative neutrality.

However, recent incidents suggest otherwise, with the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) administration again managing to amaze with its brazenness. In the ongoing controversy over the National Taiwan University Hospital (NTUH) MG149 bank account involving independent Taipei mayoral candidate Ko Wen-je (柯文哲), it appears the entire party-state apparatus has been mobilized to attack Ko on all fronts.

Foremost, from the judicial front: The Taipei District Prosecutors' Office is investigating charges filed last month by KMT Legislator Lo Shu-lei (羅淑蕾), who accused Ko of laundering money with the account, which he had set up for the surgical intensive care unit team he led at NTUH.

Then, from the executive branch front: The National Audit Office of the Control Yuan is also investigating the account after KMT Legislator Alex Fai (費振雄) demanded that it "examine the MG149 account closely" or else "[the office's] budget request will not be passed."

There was, without doubt, an undertone to Fai's remarks — which essentially amounted to a threat — that his idea of "examining the account closely" implied an imperative to find irregularities in the account.

Then there was confirmation from the Ministry of Finance's National Taxation Bureau of Taipei on Tuesday that, after what it claimed was an informant's tipoff, it is investigating Ko for alleged tax evasion, and has ordered several institutions where Ko was invited to give speeches in the past three years to explain payments they made to Ko.

Then, from the legislative branch front: The public was treated to an unbelievable scene at the legislature on Monday in which volleys of questions were fired by KMT lawmakers grilling NTUH president Huang Kuan-tang (黃寬堂) over the bank account. Imagine a joint meeting called by the legislature's Finance Committee and the Education and Culture Committee with the

KMT resorts to dirty tricks, again

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sole topic throughout the session being one account associated with one particular mayoral candidate — if this does not constitute lawmakers abusing their legislative power by interfering with a judicial case, then what does?

The extent to which the KMT administration seems to be exploiting the state apparatus for electoral purposes is beyond comprehension, and appalling.

However, the crux of the matter is that there has been no evidence suggesting a single cent from the account has gone into Ko's pockets; the NTUH and the National Audit Office have both maintained since Lo lodged the allegation that there were no irregularities in the operation of the MG149 account.

In light of the developments so far, it appears that the object of the KMT lawmakers, and the KMT government for that matter, is not to resolve questions over the account after all, but to trash Ko's reputation.

The MG149 probe is reminiscent of the Yu Chang allegations of 2012 involving then-Democratic Progressive Party presidential candidate Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文), who, after being accused of manipulating investments by the National Development Fund in TaiMed Biologics Inc during her stint as vice premier in 2007, was ultimately cleared by the judiciary of any wrongdoing.

As Ko correctly put it the other day, “the KMT was never punished over Yu Chang, it only benefited from the incident, which led to the MG149 case today.”

The electorate really has to take note, or this sort of behavior from the KMT will just happen again and again — which would not bode well for democracy.

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