

## Elections need to be less about good looks

Written by Chang Shyue-yih 張雪之  
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The distinction between politics and entertainment in Taiwan is becoming increasingly blurred, with President Ma Ying-jeou (馬英九) being the most typical example.

As everyone knows, Ma has always relied on his good looks to win more women's votes than his rivals. He often attends public events wearing super-short shorts and makes sure that the media get a good view. He also made up a titillating story about having been handed a towel by a farmer's daughter while showering during a "long stay" in southern Taiwan and so on.

Although Ma has won a string of elections by showing himself off and using pretentious words and actions, over the years his true colors have come to light. His bumbling policies have been dragging the nation and its society down for a long time, and many people who once supported him now regret it.

Likewise, a lot of candidates standing in Saturday's nine-in-one elections think that they can gain an advantage by playing on people's interest in sex and focus on appearances.

Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) Taipei mayoral candidate Sean Lien (連戰) has been saying a lot of things that he does not believe himself, while getting his pretty wife to campaign for him by wandering among plain folk like an angel descended from on high.

Lien's KMT comrade, New Taipei City Mayor Eric Chu (朱立倫), who is seeking re-election, has been busy attending bogus groundbreaking ceremonies. He is clearly trying to copy Apple chief executive Tim Cook, while claiming pretentiously that he does not aim to be like anyone in particular. Yet his ability and achievements fall far short of Cook's.

KMT Legislator Lin Tsang-min (林錫山), who is running for Changhua County commissioner, has made a campaign ad mimicking the poses that Taiwanese-Japanese heartthrob Takeshi Kaneshiro (金城武) struck in a rural setting for an airline commercial. Decked out in the same kind of dazzling white shirt, Lin looks as fresh and clean as a bean sprout.

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In Chiayi, the KMT has parachuted in a loveable princess, Chen Yi-chen (陳怡辰), to stand as its mayoral candidate. The party hopes that the former TV newsreader's cute looks and nimble tongue will help conceal her questionable administrative ability, downplay her party affiliation and obscure her corporate connections.

These are all examples of how sex appeal, pretentious language and bogus activities are being used to package candidates and give them an electoral advantage.

Elections are supposed to be about picking the most virtuous and capable candidates, not the prettiest or most handsome ones. This is not a song and dance contest, after all. Food and sex may be people's primary needs, but humans also have intellect and dignity of spirit. Nonetheless, in a society that is becoming increasingly materialistic, voters' perceptions of candidates' appearances are often the main factor determining who they vote for, and people's ability to think about things rationally seems to be on the wane.

Many politicians who are good at cultivating their images turn out to be unwilling or incapable of doing a proper job once they are elected.

One of independent Taipei mayoral candidate Ko Wen-je's (柯文哲) characteristics is that he likes to tell the truth, which has made him a hero in the public's eyes, yet many people are still caught up in the atmosphere of entertainment-style politics and they often let politicians fool them without realizing it.

All the sex and lies need to be cleared out of Taiwanese politics. Then people will be less likely to make wrong choices that they live to regret.

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Translated by Julian Clegg

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