

Initiatives cannot fool Taiwanese

Written by Taipei Times Editorial
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Over the past two weeks, the public has gotten a good look into how Beijing's two-handed Taiwan strategy is being put into practice.

First, on Feb. 28, China's Taiwan Affairs Office announced 31 measures it billed as "incentives," saying that the new regulations would benefit Taiwanese, as they were devised specifically to improve the rights of Taiwanese studying, working, living or starting a business in China.

Just as Taiwanese were wondering how sincere Beijing's goodwill was in introducing these measures, reports emerged about incidents that revealed China's hypocrisy.

The Swedish Tax Agency on Feb. 28 announced that Taiwan would be listed as a province of China (Taiwan, Provins i Kina), instead of the Republic of China (Republiken Kina, Taiwan), on its Web site starting yesterday.

Another media report surfaced yesterday, saying that China has pressured the Swiss government to list the hometown of Taiwanese living in Switzerland as "China" instead of "Taiwan" on their Swiss driver's licenses. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs responded that it is still verifying the matter with the Swiss government, but China has no doubt damaged its image once again in the eyes of Taiwanese.

Beijing authorities have repeatedly said that they wish to win Taiwanese hearts and minds. Their most recent expressions of "generosity" are clearly part of a scheme to lure more Taiwanese to China.

Chinese officials hope such benefits will help Taiwanese view them as being less hostile, and even foster a gradual sense of Chinese identity that favors unification with "the motherland" — but the truth is: Money can't buy love.

Granted, there will be people who swarm to the other side of the Strait for monetary gains and

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better employment opportunities, seemingly unconcerned by the fact that Taiwan's international presence is constantly being belittled by Beijing.

However, the material benefits being proffered by China cannot hide the true nature of the Chinese Communist Party, which all too soon reveals its overbearing self and usurps the right of individuals to make their own democratic choices.

There is a saying that has been circulating among Taiwanese businesspeople based in China: "Earn Chinese money, but vote for the Democratic Progressive Party."

The truth is that the longer Taiwanese live in China, the more they discover just how different Taiwan's precious air of freedom and democracy is from the air in China under Chinese President Xi Jinping (习近平), with his new limitless term.

China might pat itself on the back, thinking that it has outsmarted Taiwan, but the truth is that such a brazen two-handed strategy works only to enforce the perception that China is a hypocrite.

Premier William Lai (赖清德) on Tuesday last week said that "the core of the incentive measures or the '1992 consensus' seeks to benefit China, which wants to annex Taiwan eventually."

If China continues to disrespect Taiwan's sovereignty, but continues to deploy sneaky moves in its oppression of Taiwan's international space, it can expect the resentment that Taiwanese feel toward Beijing to grow — no matter how many more so-called "incentives" Beijing plans to roll out.

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