

Just when it seemed the Chinese Nationalist Party's (KMT) presidential election campaign, with candidate Kaohsiung Mayor Han Kuo-yu (韓國瑜), could not become any more farcical, the party plumbs a new low with its orchestrated political stunt last week outside the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which quickly backfired and plunged Han's campaign into fresh chaos.

It all started when a "flash mob" of KMT legislators and Taipei City councilors converged outside the ministry's main entrance on Friday last week and attempted to force their way into the building. The group claimed that they were there to demand that Minister of Foreign Affairs Joseph Wu (吳敦義) open an investigation into the suicide last year of Su Chii-cherng (蘇治全), then director-general of the Osaka branch of the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in Japan.

The KMT had engaged in a similar stunt several days prior, when party members tastelessly paraded a coffin outside the ministry.

During the ensuing scuffle last Friday, which lasted about one hour, KMT Legislator Arthur Chen (陳其南) was caught on camera appearing to shove an on-duty policewoman and knock off her cap. The images were splashed across the media, but instead of issuing a sincere apology, KMT deputy spokesman Huang Hsin-hua (黃欣華) issued a written statement, saying that the plainclothes police officer appeared to be a "random passerby" or a "weird aunty."

It then emerged that two of the KMT legislators participating in the stunt, Lin Yi-hua (林錫山) and Chen Yu-jen (陳玉珍), were taken to National Taiwan University Hospital's emergency room for treatment, saying that they had been injured.

Chen Yu-jen was placed on a bed in the acute and critical care section for — wait for it — bruised fingers, after they were caught in a door. Chen Yu-jen said she felt dizzy and had difficulty breathing. The KMT then released photographs of Han and other party politicians clustered around Chen Yu-jen's bedside, wearing concerned expressions and making fist-pumping gestures.

Events took an even stranger turn when the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) released a video of the scuffle at the ministry that appeared to show KMT Legislator Huang Chao-shun

Tired of KMT's moronic stunts

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() repeatedly jamming Chen Yu-jen's hand into the opening between double doors and then pushing on one of the doors, as if trying to intentionally bruise her hand.

While it is tempting to shrug off the entire brouhaha as a toe-curlingly embarrassing distraction from the mature political debate that we should be having, there are two takeaways from the KMT's self-inflicted omnishambles:

First, it neatly demonstrates to the electorate the party's willingness to play fast and loose with the truth, as well as its political immaturity. Instead of apologizing for a moronic political stunt that degenerated into loutish behavior, the KMT attempted to create a diversion that fooled precisely no one and achieved nothing except the waste of precious hospital resources.

As Han's bizarre election campaign continues to tank with the electorate, the KMT appears to be resorting to increasingly outlandish measures in a desperate attempt to change the election narrative and cast themselves as "victims."

The latest poll by the Chinese-language Formosa Weekly newspaper, conducted before the incident, shows support for the DPP at 51.8 percent, with the KMT trailing at a woeful 16.1 percent.

Second, as the wheels fall off the KMT's campaign, with one month still to go until election day, Beijing will be watching closely and might already be dusting off contingency plans to influence the election.

Despite its commanding lead in the polls, the DPP must guard against complacency and should expect China to step up its covert operations as the final furlong of the campaign unfolds.

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