

Taiwanese pride suffers under Ma: poll

Written by Taipei Times

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A majority of Taiwanese said they did not feel more proud to be a citizen of the Republic of China (ROC) after President Ma Ying-jeou (馬英九) took office in May 2008, a poll released by the Taiwan Thinktank ahead of Double Ten National Day showed yesterday.

The poll showed that 65 percent of respondents said they had not felt their sense of pride as an ROC citizen grow after Ma assumed office, while 31.3 percent said they had.

Among respondents who claimed they did not have any political affiliation, about 75 percent said they did not feel more proud to be an ROC citizen, according to the poll conducted on Wednesday and Thursday by the think tank, which is generally perceived to be more sympathetic to the pan-green camp.

While the Ma administration has planned various activities this year to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the founding of the ROC next year, nearly 59 percent said they did not know about the government's efforts against 41.5 percent who said they did.

About 96 percent said they did not feel a sense of involvement in the celebrations, against 3.8 percent who said they did. The feeling was reported among pan-blue and pan-green supporters, as well as moderate voters.

Tung Li-wen (鄧立文), a professor at the Graduate School of Public Security at Central Police University, said the results of the survey were not surprising because the Ma administration's policies had made the public anxious about their future and lose their confidence in the Chinese Nationalist Party's (KMT) governance.

"People can hardly feel proud when the government talks about the '1992 consensus' and the president of this country does not mind being called 'Mister,'" he said.

Tung attributed the declining sense of pride to the polarization of ethnic identification and an unclear national spirit.

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People also feel less proud because when they wanted to express their patriotism by holding the national flag, singing the national anthem or saying the country's name out loud, they were prevented from doing so, Tung said.

"Oh, please, it's Double Ten Day, and we can't even fly our national flag," Hsu Yung-ming (許雲明), a political scientist at Soochow University, said, mimicking the tone of former Executive Yuan secretary-general Hsueh Hsiang-chuan (許信德).

Hsueh complained that it was Father's Day, when he was harshly criticized for dining with his father while the south was ravaged by Typhoon Morakot in August last year.

Hsu was referring to the incident at the Asian University Basketball Championship on Thursday. Spectators were asked to fold up the ROC national flag they were waving on the bleachers. The Chinese team withdrew from a game on Friday when they saw hundreds of ROC national flags from the campus' parking lots all the way to the bleachers, an initiative undertaken by Taiwanese students in response to Thursday's incident.

Hsu urged the government to refrain from using the ROC centennial as a pretext for drumming up support for KMT candidates in next month's municipality elections.

Lai I-chung (賴宜中), an executive board member at the think tank, said that pride in one's nationality comes from two areas: government efforts to protect sovereignty and a democratic system. However, both have become problematic issues under Ma's leadership, he said.

Former deputy National Security Council (NSC) secretary-general Chen Chung-hsin (陳重信) added that the new term "pride of Taiwan" given to outstanding individuals reflected a certain lack of self-confidence and apprehension about identity.

The poll questioned 1,046 adults nationwide and has a margin of error of plus or minus 3 percent.

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