

Expert says meeting harmed Taiwan

WORDS OF WARNING: A professor highlighted the perils of liberalization of cross-strait policies and said economic cooperation would result in political unification

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Taipei was the ultimate loser in the meeting between President Ma Ying-jeou (馬英九) and China's cross-strait negotiator Chen Yunlin (陳雲林) last week, as Beijing clearly sent out the message that Taiwan is part of China, an expert attending a forum said yesterday.

Lai I-chung (賴怡忠), an executive member of the pro-localization Taiwan Thinktank and former director of the DPP's International Affairs Department, said that the purpose of Chen's visit was not his meeting with counterpart, Straits Exchange Foundation (SEF) Chairman Chiang Pin-kung (江丙坤), or the four agreements they signed, but his meeting with Ma.

He made the comments at a forum entitled "Cross-strait relations and economic and trade policy in the wake of the Chiang-Chen meeting," held yesterday in Taipei.

Lai said he did not think there would be another meeting between Ma and Chen because Chen had successfully demonstrated to the world that the "one China" principle was not denied by the Ma administration, as Chen managed to see Ma even though he did not address Ma by his official title.

"Chen's visit has completed the missing piece of the puzzle of the 'one China' principle," Lai said.

"His visit has internationalized the 'one China' principle and forfeited Taiwan's way of interacting with the world," he said.

While Ma could have used his meeting with Chen as leverage to make demands, Lai said he instead thought the meeting would boost his plummeting popularity and that he had pinned all the country's hopes of improving the economy on China.

Lai said Ma could have turned demonstrations to his favor had he rejected the meeting when he learned that Chen would not address him by his official title.

Ma should have also told Chen that the 23 million people of Taiwan would have the final say on the country's future during their meeting, instead of saying it at the press conference he called beforehand.

Lai said he was worried that Ma would sell out Taiwan during his four years in office if no immediate action was taken.

Huang Tien-lin (黃天麟), a national policy advisor to former president Chen Shui-bian (陳水扁), said that the cross-strait policy of the Chen administration was wrong because it was impossible to maintain closer economic ties with Beijing while upholding sovereignty because economic interests would always prevail.

"When it [the DPP] makes people believe that Taiwan's economy must be dependant on China, who do you think they will vote for in the presidential election?" he asked.

Huang urged the DPP to change its strategy or run the risk of never making a comeback.

Wang To-far (王塗發), a professor of economics at National Taipei University, warned of the perils of deregulation and liberalization of cross-strait policies.

Wang said economic cooperation with China would eventually lead to political unification.

He said that the four agreements signed last week should be examined by the legislature and voted on by the people.

"The four accords are paving the way for the 'one China common market' and ultimate unification with China," he said.

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