

DPP's success in local elections surprising: ex-US rep



AIT former director William Stanton. (File photo/CNA)

Former director of the American Institute in Taiwan's Taipei Office William Stanton said Saturday that the staggering success seen by Taiwan's opposition Democratic Progressive Party in last weekend's elections was surprising, even though he had expected the party to gain an advantage.

Stanton, who is now the interim senior vice president for global affairs at National Tsing Hua University in Hsinchu, said he did not expect that the DPP would do so well, referring to the opposition party's crushing of the Kuomintang by winning 13 of 22 mayoral-level races, leaving the ruling party with only six.

The former diplomat said on the sidelines of an international conference on Taiwan's role in Asia that from his interactions with students he sensed that many young people were dissatisfied with the current situation in Taiwan and would vote for change, but he was still surprised by the DPP's victory in the KMT strongholds of Taoyuan and Taichung.

Factors that could have contributed to the KMT's defeat include public dissatisfaction with the economy and the after-effects of the Sunflower Student Movement that occupied the Legislature to oppose the trade-in-services deal with China earlier this year, he said.

Asked whether the results of the elections will influence the development of the cross-strait ties, Stanton said that "it's hard to say."

"We will need to wait and see future developments," he said.

He added that Beijing has been cautious about its dealings with Taiwan. China has been preparing "for every contingency," he said in reference to how Beijing might react if the China-wary DPP wins the 2016 presidential race.

Stanton was speaking to reporters at the International Conference on New Asian Dynamics and the Role of Taiwan, co-organized by the US-based Project 2049 Institute and the Taiwan Brain Trust, a Taiwanese think tank.

It brought together experts from Australia, Japan, Taiwan, India, South Korea and the United States to discuss issues related to new Asian dynamics, the role of Taiwan, cross-Taiwan Strait relations and others.

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