

Common sense society

Common sense is the talk of the town, regarding the ongoing unproductive and consumptive brawls over the qualifications of Cho Kuk, a former senior presidential secretary for civil affairs, to take the justice minister post as nominated by President Moon Jae-in.

In other words, this means there are many things against common sense in this society now.

The reason is quite simple. Suspicions and controversies surrounding the justice minister nominee have gone beyond all reasonable bounds, causing a serious split in public opinion.

Common sense and justice are the very basis of state affairs that the Moon government has been advocating.

Yet, Cho, a jurist and a Seoul National University law professor who put aside his academic career to follow around a presidential candidate, hoping for a government position or parliamentary seat, has been in the middle of a shameful scandal he brought upon himself.

Along with the topic of common sense, criminal suspects' signature answer to questions by investigators — "I dunno" — has emerged in people's daily life thanks to the justice minister nominee.

Then, what is common sense? It is the basic level of practical knowledge and judgment that we all need to help us live in a reasonable and safe way, according to English



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dictionaries.

Common sense is the natural ability to reason, manage, make good decisions and conduct affairs by thinking things through and coming to reasonable conclusions.

Common sense as "normal" people understand it means one is "sensible" and can avoid many of life's common pitfalls by acting in sensible, responsible ways. Lack of common sense can get even intelligent people into huge amounts of trouble.

Examples of common sense in our daily life can include: respecting elders, not giving excuses for oneself or others, saying please, thank you or sorry, apologizing for wrongdoings, not smoking in public and not going out nude in public, and so on.

Japan's unilateral decision to ban exports of some chemical materials to South Korea is an example of the lack of common sense in a global society.

A society where common sense works is a healthy society. A society where common sense does not work and unlawful acts are rampant is a sick society. President Moon has

called for the building of a common-sense society.

Day after day since Moon nominated Cho as justice minister a month ago, news reports about suspicious, scandalous and allegedly unlawful acts of the nominee and his family members are making headlines ahead of a National Assembly confirmation hearing, though his supporters in the presidential office, ruling party and some progressive groups condemn them as "fake news."

Cho has been a clear target of a public outcry over the alleged irregularities, including the suspected illicit and unfair entrance of his 28-year-old daughter into a prestigious university and a graduate school and a hefty investment by his wife and family members in a private equity fund.

The National Assembly hearing was almost aborted over the weekend due to bipartisan wrangling over who would appear as witnesses, including Cho's wife, and the ruling party, as reported well, allowed the nominee to hold a press conference Monday at the Assembly.

It is the crystal clear lack of common sense that the nominee for a Cabinet post had a chance to excuse himself about the piles of allegations during a press conference at the Assembly. Belatedly Wednesday, the rival parties managed to agree to hold the hearing today.

Furthermore, Cho, flatly denying the corruption allegations related to his wife and daughter, in particular, devoted himself to saying "I dunno" to the reporters' questions, more than 100 times during the press meet that continued for 10 hours and 45 minutes through the night.

The aforementioned "I dunno" used to be one of the easiest replies of criminal suspects to deny allegations against them. The prosecution is conducting an "intensive" investigation into the allegations involving the justice minister nominee and his family members.

It is against common sense that a candidate for a Cabinet seat who is being investigated along with his family as criminal suspects refuses to withdraw his nomination. It would be common sense for Cho to withdraw to help the prosecution realize social "justice" or for Moon to rescind his nomination.

British singer-songwriter Cat Stevens, now Yusuf Islam since 1978, said: "I am confident that, in the end, common sense and justice will prevail. I'm an optimist, brought up on the belief that if you wait to the end of the story, you get to see the good people live happily ever after."

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Building inclusive UN with Taiwan on board

By Dr. Jaushieh Joseph Wu

In July, President Tsai Ing-wen of the Republic of China (Taiwan) transited through New York, an icon of diversity and freedom and home to the United Nations, as a prelude to her state visit to Taiwan's diplomatic allies in the Caribbean.

While meeting with the permanent representatives to the U.N. of Taiwan's allies, President Tsai reiterated that Taiwan's 23 million people have the right to participate in the U.N. system. She also emphasized that Taiwan is committed to joining hands with global partners to help achieve the U.N. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to forge the world we want, and the future we need.

The SDGs form a blueprint for a better and more sustainable future, aiming to guide the world down a sustainable and resilient path with "no one left behind."

In the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development in July, U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres stressed again the pressing need to accelerate relevant actions. Likewise, he called on nations to advance the "Inclusion Imperative" because "development is not sustainable if it is not fair and inclusive."

The principles of inclusiveness and leaving no one behind are key to realizing the SDGs. Taiwan, a full-fledged democracy, has made considerable progress in fulfilling the SDGs and has provided assistance to countries in need.

Nevertheless, it continues to be barred from participating in related meetings, mechanisms and activities due to political interference. This has seriously undermined the principle of partnership, the foundation of the SDGs, which requires the participation of all countries, stakeholders, and peoples. Taiwan is willing and ready to share its success story and contribute further to the collective efforts to achieve the SDGs.

After many years, Taiwan has made great strides in alleviating poverty and achieving zero hunger. Our percentage of low-income households has been reduced to 1.6 percent. Launched in 1993, the National Health Insurance program now covers 99.8 percent of the population. In 2018, our waste recycling rate reached 55.69 percent, our literacy rate at 98.8 percent, and our infant mortality rate of 4.2 per 1,000. These figures far surpass SDG standards.

The government of Taiwan has further identified six major areas of interest with respect to the SDGs: smart water management, sustainable energy transformation, clean air, sustainable materials management and the circular economy, ecological conservation and green networks, and international partnerships. These areas complement the main theme of the U.N. High-Level Political Forum 2018, the SDGs, and the 5Ps — people, planet, peace, prosperity, and partnership — referred to in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

In recent years, Taiwan has been providing development assistance to and engaging in cooperation programs with partner countries in the Pacific, Asia, Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean.

In 2018 alone, Taiwan conducted development projects in SDG areas of interest in 39 countries. We will continue to track international trends and the needs of partner countries to ensure that all operations are aligned with the SDGs.

Considering Taiwan's robust experience and contributions, it is absurd that the country is barred from sharing experience and critical information that could be used to better coordinate international efforts.

The oft-cited legal basis for excluding Taiwan from the U.N. is Resolution 2758 (XXVI), adopted by the U.N. General Assembly in 1971. However, the resolution does not address the issue of Taiwan's representation in the U.N., nor does it state that Taiwan is part of the People's Republic of China (PRC).

In fact, Taiwan is not, nor has it ever been, part of the PRC. Only Taiwan's democratically elected government can represent its 23 million people. Unfortunately, the U.N. continues to misuse and misinterpret the resolution to justify its wrongful exclusion and isolation of Taiwan.

International organizations are created to meet the common objectives of its members, not to serve the interests of just one member. Article 100 of the U.N. Charter clearly states that "In the performance of their duties the Secretary-General and the staff shall not seek or receive instructions from any government or from any other authority external to the Organization."

Regrettably, the U.N. sits idly by whenever China seeks to impose its so-called "one China principle" on the U.N. system. The most recent example involves dozens of NGOs being denied Consultative Status by the U.N. Economic and Social Council simply because a reference to Taiwan in their documents contradicts China's demands.

A truly inclusive U.N. would not leave anyone behind. Today, however, Taiwan passport holders are blocked from entering U.N. premises for public visits and meetings. Taiwanese journalists and media outlets are also denied accreditation to cover U.N. meetings. These practices are unjust and discriminatory, and contravene the principle of universality upon which the U.N. was founded. The U.N. should make its actions and words congruent, and take immediate action to rectify its exclusionary practices.

This dire situation does not, and never will, intimidate Taiwan. Taiwan is ready, willing and able to contribute. If the U.N. continues to yield to China's coercion, rejecting Taiwan's participation, it will only encourage Beijing's callousness.

Efforts to fulfill the purpose of achieving international cooperation in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural, or humanitarian character, and in promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all, as stated in Article 1 of the U.N. Charter, will also be impaired.

If the host of nations is serious about promoting inclusion and making development sustainable for all, it should open its doors to Taiwan.

Dr. Jaushieh Joseph Wu is Taiwan's minister of foreign affairs.



What we keep getting wrong about mass shootings

By Rudolph Bush

There is a special kind of stupidity that approaches terrible and repeating problems with an obstinate assurance of what the answer will or won't be.

Or maybe it's cynicism — just digging in against any sort of movement that might be politically dangerous, even if it promises to break the paralysis of doing nothing repeatedly.

By now, with more than 200 mass shootings since Columbine and already 33 this year, we have to acknowledge that we are a deeply unwell nation. Or at least we are a nation cultivating terribly unwell people with the nihilistic will to kill all in their paths.

Motive isn't really sortable. Yes, racism has emerged as an important theme. But mass shootings come with or without ostensible motives. We're guessing each time another one occurs at what exactly drove the killer. Often, once the facts are settled, we're wrong.

What these shootings mostly have in common is the presence of a disturbed (generally white, generally young) man and a powerful weapon.

An honest assessment of how to prevent these killings has to look at both elements and try to understand (a) what in our culture is creating monsters and (b) what do we do about the easy access to the weapons they use to kill people.

These are social and political questions that we could begin to answer if we were willing to do so honestly.

The guns question is turning, and with each shooting it has become harder for Second Amendment absolutists to defend the kind of broad access to high-powered military-style semi-automatic rifles.

Gov. Greg Abbott is left with a series of increasingly embarrassing tweets celebrating the kinds of weapons that most of us now associate first with wanton murder. Sen. Ted Cruz, meanwhile, is stumbling through Twitter about how "We need to do MUCH more to stop violent criminals & those w/ dangerous mental illness BEFORE they murder."

He's not wrong about that. He just refuses to consider the other half of



the problem in the name of what he has made a religious, versus a political, matter. He throws around Bible verses in defense of the AR-15, citing Exodus 22:2, which justifies killing a burglar in your house as long as it's at night. That might appeal to a certain constituency. But it does nothing to draw most Americans into the conversation or to advance this genuine human crisis toward a political solution.

Abbott has apparently realized the politics are shifting and is rolling out a plan to address mass shootings, although the details aren't yet known. He understands though that with each new horror, Americans become more inclined toward greater restrictions. That's a normal and healthy human response. Most of us come to realize why hot stoves burn.

With guns, there are obvious, easy compromises with background checks, red flag laws and limits on magazine capacity that a more serious political class would have already engaged. (Although tougher background checks may be harder to propose as a solution after Odesa. The gunman there failed a background check but was able to get his hands on a rifle anyway.)

Tougher proposals will surely follow whatever Abbott puts forward as less secure politicians realize the untenability of defending the gun

access America has now. That brings us to the second half of the equation, the disaffected man. This is the question that the left is less equipped to deal with and where its leaders stumble badly. There are deep holes, wounds really, in our culture that are nurturing nihilists. Only the most profound spiritual emptiness could lead a human being to slaughter people just going about their daily lives.

It is the deepest immoral expression of the conclusion that life is meaningless. Why does someone come to that conclusion? Because evil, the only name this sort of killing deserves, will fill a vacuum in a soul. So where does the vacuum come from? Where is the loss of meaning and grounding in basic human decency?

Leaders on the left would be wise to speak more openly of the problem of a moral and cultural relativism that persistently undermines, as old-fashioned as it might sound, the value and dignity of human life.

After the killings in El Paso, U.S. Rep. Ted Lieu slammed Walmart for "blaming video games," a common response now from the left. The company had, in fact, called on employees to "remove signing and displays referencing violence." That wasn't a moral decision by Walmart,

of course. It was a public relations response. But, it too, was a hot-stove human reaction that we ought to be attentive to. Something in our gut is telling us this isn't what a society should be celebrating and promoting, no matter how much money it makes.

If we are willing to open the question of what we should do about the availability of weapons of war, shouldn't we also be willing to look deeply into the culture we have created and ask what in it is empty and wanting? What in it is leading killers to believe that human life has no value?

There is no single answer to the terrible thing we are living through. There is not even a multiplicity of answers that can be applied to each circumstance.

The only appropriate and serious response to this wave of soulless terror is a willingness to consider every possible answer, to set aside biases and pre-conclusions and listen wholly to those with whom we might disagree and then to offer compromises and considerations that address both the killer and the weapon.

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