

Explanation on Mainland Chinese Residents' Participation in the "Fo Guang Shan Memorial Ceremony for Master Hsing Yun"

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Master Hsing Yun was a globally-venerated religious leader and spiritual guide for many people in Taiwan. The government attaches great importance to the "Memorial Ceremony for Master Hsing Yun" that is to be held by Fo Guang Shan on February 13, 2023. On the issue of entry applications made by mainland Chinese residents, the Mainland Affairs Council (MAC) jointly convened ad hoc meetings with the competent authority in full and active efforts to provide relevant assistance. The government has already completed work on issuing the entry permits for a total of 120 individuals, including Master Hsing Yun's relatives and friends in mainland China and Hong Kong, delegations from Buddhist temples, followers, and religious figures. The MAC will also duly assist in the coordination of follow-up entry and memorial affairs for relevant personnel.

Regarding the applications made by some serving officials of mainland China's Taiwan Affairs Office (TAO) and United Front Work Department to visit Taiwan for the memorial ceremony, the MAC stated that between the MAC and TAO, there is already a mechanism for communication and liaison on the working level to ensure smooth cross-Strait travel by personnel of respective competent authorities, and there have been precedents for both sides to coordinate and provide mutual assistance under this existing mechanism. If mainland Chinese officials truly wish to visit Taiwan, the TAO should contact the MAC in advance for notification and discussion in keeping with this aforementioned liaison mechanism, but the MAC has not received any information from mainland China in this regard.

The MAC further stated that mainland China's former director of the State Administration for Religious Affairs Ye Xiaowen also applied to visit Taiwan for the memorial ceremony. Ye has previously been accused of religious persecution by

civil organizations, and his visit to Taiwan in 2009 for the World Buddhist Forum sparked public protests; therefore, the competent authority denied his subsequent entry applications on account of social stability and security issues. Since these risk factors still persist, Ye's current entry application to visit Taiwan was denied in line with the previous decisions to avoid unnecessary disruption to the Taiwan society and ensure the smooth completion of the memorial ceremony for Master Hsing Yun.

Master Hsing Yun dedicated his life to Buddhism and promotion of the Buddhist doctrines. He was also a long-term advocate of culture, education, and charity. His contributions to both the Taiwan society and cross-Strait affairs are manifold. We hope that, at this moment, mainland China can join Taiwan in remembering Master Hsing Yun and his legacy and refrain from deepening the resentment of the Taiwan public through further political manipulation.