

Dalai Lama under 'gag order' from Taipei

Written by Taipei Times

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Tibetan leader the Dalai Lama, right, and Cardinal Paul Shan Kuo-hsi of Taiwan's Catholic Church bow to each other during a meeting in Taipei.
PHOTO: PICHI CHUANG, REUTERS

The Dalai Lama arrived in Taipei yesterday as his nephew said the government had put a “gag order” on the exiled religious leader out of fears of Beijing’s reaction.

The Dalai Lama traveled on a high-speed train from Kaohsiung after two days focused on the plight of communities devastated by Typhoon Morakot last month.

The Dalai Lama’s nephew, Khedroob Thondup, told Agence France-Presse that Taiwan had directly requested the tour be kept low-profile.

“They put a gag order on him. Before he left India he was told not to say anything political and to curtail his activities,” said Thondup, also a member of the Tibetan parliament-in-exile in India.

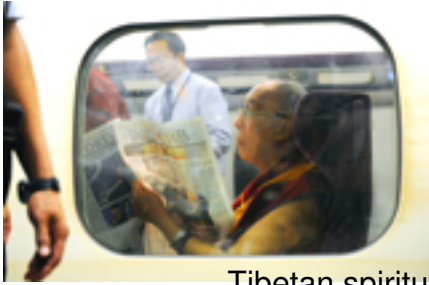
“This was conveyed to our office in New Delhi. He was told to cut down even religious activities. This is all because of pressure from Beijing,” he said by telephone from India.

The Dalai Lama’s visit to Taiwan has triggered reactions from Beijing, which vilifies him as a “splittist” bent on Tibet independence, in turn causing pan-blue politicians to worry publicly about the impact on China ties.

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Tibetan spiritual leader the Dalai Lama reads a newspaper on the High Speed Rail at the
PHOTO: CHIEN JUNG-FONG, LIBERTY TIMES

"The coming few days will be extremely crucial," Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) Chairman Wu Poh-hsiung (吳伯雄) said.

"We have a typhoon blowing from Beijing," an unnamed KMT official was quoted as saying by local media.

As the Dalai Lama arrived at the Howard Plaza Hotel in Taipei, about 100 supporters of Taiwan's unification with China waved posters saying: "Taiwan, Tibet are both part of China."

"We have a typhoon blowing from Beijing."
— unnamed KMT official

At least one demonstrator was carried away by police after a scuffle with officers before the Dalai Lama's arrival.

Organizers said that the Dalai Lama would spend most of today at his hotel meeting Tibetan and Buddhist groups. The Dalai Lama has no scheduled public appearance today and is expected to return to India tomorrow.

Earlier in the day, the Dalai Lama held a dialogue in Kaohsiung with Cardinal Paul Shan (陳柏森) on a broad range of topics including heaven, nature, humanity and deteriorating ethics and

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morality in society.

The event attracted an audience of more than 1,000 people, including Kaohsiung Mayor Chen Chu (陳菊) and Taiwan High Speed Rail Corp chairwoman Nita Ing (英格).

In the two-and-a-half-hour public conversation, the two religious leaders also elaborated on the differences between Buddhism and Christianity.

Meanwhile, the Kaohsiung City Government said the Dalai Lama donated US\$50,000 to victims of Morakot yesterday through the office of Kaohsiung Mayor Chen Chu.

The Tibetan spiritual leader made the donation during a lunch gathering with the mayor and county commissioners of five local governments in southern Taiwan and asked that the money be put into the bank account of the nonprofit charity, United Way of Taiwan, the city government said in a press release.

The Dalai Lama also attached a brief letter to the monetary contribution, stressing that he is visiting Taiwan out of "humanitarian concern" and to give a helping hand to Morakot victims.

Chen, who was present at the gathering, gave a pair of bobble head dolls and bags of pineapple cakes to the Dalai Lama in appreciation for his love and care on behalf of Kaohsiung residents.

The Dalai Lama in return gave her a small golden Buddha.

At a separate setting yesterday, the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) said it would be "rude" and "impolite" of President Ma Ying-jeou (馬英九) if he continued to refuse to meet the Dalai Lama, calling Ma an "inconsiderate host."

The Dalai Lama, however, has not made a formal request to meet the president.

The DPP also criticized the government for not treating the religious leader as a head of state who is recognized by many countries as the official leader of the Tibetan government-in-exile.

"The Dalai Lama has visited Taiwan twice and each time was warmly received by the president — former presidents Lee Teng-hui (李登輝) and Chen Shui-bian (陳水扁). During his 2001 visit, then-Taipei mayor Ma even called the Dalai Lama an eternal friend of Taipei City," DPP Spokesman Cheng Wen-tsang (鄭文堂) said.

The government has not only given the Nobel Peace laureate the cold shoulder, it has also refused to dispatch an adequate security detail to ensure the Dalai Lama's safety — not a way to treat a so-called "eternal friend," Cheng said.

The Dalai Lama arrived on Sunday night under the invitation of seven local government chiefs in southern Taiwan to perform prayer services for the victims and survivors of Morakot.

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The move, however, has elicited sharp words from the pan-blue camp and Beijing, which accused the DPP of exploiting the plight of victims to score political points.

The DPP said the Dalai Lama's visit was non-political in nature and had only one purpose: to offer comfort and blessings for the survivors. The DPP said it was the critics who were twisting a simple humanitarian mission into a political battle.

On Tuesday, Buddhist Master Hsing Yun (釋尊) was quoted as saying during a joint interview with journalists from China that the procedure for the Dalai Lama's visit was wrong, as was the time and place of his visit, because he was not invited by representatives from disaster zones.

Hsing Yun said the whole thing was political manipulation.

"These are disaster zones, so he should have been invited by representatives of the hard-hit areas ... without an invitation from local disaster areas, it is nothing short of a political manipulation beyond religious purposes," Hsing Yun said.

In response, DPP Legislator Chen Ying (陳瑛) said of Hsing Yun, who favors unification with China: "Isn't he himself a political monk?"

DPP Legislator Chen Ting-fei (陳亭妃) said the result of a poll conducted by the DPP clearly showed public approval of the visit.

A recent telephone poll by the DPP showed that 75.4 percent of the 709 respondents supported the visit by the Dalai Lama and 67.2 percent agreed the visit was not political. The poll also said 77.7 percent of respondents felt protests against the Dalai Lama were inappropriate, and 79.6 percent said Beijing should not use cross-strait relations as a gambit to deter the visit.

Chen said the public had its own standards when it came to religious matters.

"Everybody knows clearly who is doing what," she said.

Source: [Taipei Times 2009/09/03](#)