

Top posts at Taiwan's HK office empty as ties get worse: sources



Then head of the MAC Lai Shin-yuan at the opening ceremony of Taiwan's renamed office in Hong Kong in 2011. CNA file photo
Hong Kong, July 17 (CNA) The acting director-general of Taiwan's representative office in Hong Kong has left the Chinese special administration region after its government refused to extend his work visa.

Kao Ming-tsun (高銘尊) reportedly left Hong Kong on Thursday after he refused to sign an endorsement of Beijing's "one China" principle and was denied an extension of his work visa, according to media reports from Taiwan.

A day before Kao's departure, division chiefs at the office in charge of consular affairs and general administration, respectively, left the former British colony to return to Taiwan after their work visas expired, according to sources familiar with the matter.

It is not known if the departures of Chou Chia-ju (周家駒) (consular services) and Lee Chin-mei (李錦梅) (general administration) also resulted from their inability to get their work visas extended.

With the departures, of the five divisions at the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in Hong Kong, four of them, responsible for consular, press and cultural, and liaison services and general administration, were without division chiefs.

That has left Ni Bo-chia (倪博嘉), head of the office's economic division, as the highest ranking official at the office.

Despite the exodus, consular and visa services at the office have remained normal, according to unidentified sources.

This further breakdown in ties comes just weeks after China imposed a National Security Law on Hong Kong that was condemned by Taiwan and that many fear will erode the freedom and rule of law that have long existed in Hong Kong.

Relations between Taiwan and China were already at loggerheads, having been that way since Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文) of the pro-independence Democratic Progressive Party took office in May 2016.

Tsai's government has rejected any suggestion that Taiwan is a part of China, including the "one China principle," leading Beijing to cut off dialogue and cease formal interaction with Taiwan.

Consequently, the Taiwan office in Hong Kong has been without a director-general since July 2018 because the Hong Kong government was reluctant to grant a work visa to Taipei's appointee for the post.

The appointee of Taiwan's Ministry of Culture (MOC) to take over its office in Hong Kong has faced the same roadblock since December 2018.

The Taiwan office in Hong Kong is under the Mainland Affairs Council, Taiwan's top China policy coordinator, and the MOC's representative to Hong Kong doubles as head of the division of

cultural affairs at the office.

As a result, the cultural affairs division has been without a leader since late 2018.

The MAC has yet to comment on the recent personnel moves.

When Premier Su Tseng-chang (蘇貞昌) was asked about why Kao left, he said it was because Taiwan is a sovereign independent country.

“We will firmly defend our sovereignty,” he said, without confirming if Kao has left Hong Kong because of Beijing’s rejection of his request to extend his work visa.

(By Stanley Cheung and Elizabeth Hsu)

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Taiwan ranked as second safest country in the world



Taipei (CNA) Taiwan is the second safest country in the world, after Qatar, according to visitors to an online database, who voted on 133 countries/territories globally.

In the Crime Index by Country 2020 Mid-Year survey, Taiwan scored 84.74 out of 100 for safety, the online database Numbeo showed.

That score put Taiwan in second place among 133 countries and territories worldwide, followed by the United Arab Emirates (84.55) and Georgia (79.50).

The top ranked country was Qatar, with a safety score of 88.10, according to Numbeo, which said the results were based on surveys of visitors to its website who were asked to rate the safety and overall level of crime in the 133 countries/territories listed.



Photo: Office of the President of Taiwan, via Flickr.

The crime levels in each country were scored by means of a straightforward subtraction of the safety score from the total 100 points.

Under that system, Taiwan's crime level score was 15.26, according to Numbeo, which rates the crime levels as very low if the scores are below 20 in the index, low if the score is 20-40, moderate 40-60, high 60-80, and very high over 80.

The three countries with highest crime scores in the survey were Venezuela (84.36), Papua New Guinea (80.04) and South Africa (77.29).

In the biannual online survey, Qatar and Taiwan also ranked first and second, respectively, for safety in the first one

this year.

(By Joseph Yeh)

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