

Penang State Gives Highest Civilian Honor to Master Cheng Yen

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In recognition of the 19 years of work by the Tzu Chi Foundation in Malaysia, the state of Penang awarded its highest civil honor to Master Cheng Yen. It was a moment of great pride for the 2,569 certified volunteers in the country.

On the occasion of his 74th birthday, the Governor of Penang gave awards and medals to those who have made important contributions to society. Among them was Master Cheng Yen, who received the title of DGPN (Darjah Gemilang Pangkuan Negeri); it carries the title 'Datuk Seri'. This is the highest honor which the Governor can grant to an individual in recognition of their services to the country and society.

Before the award ceremony, volunteers of Tzu Chi Malaysia went to Hualien to report the good news to Master Cheng Yen herself. It made headlines in the Chinese newspapers in Malaysia and was indeed a great honor for all the volunteers in the country. The foundation in Malaysia was established 19 years ago by a volunteer from Taiwan named Ye Ci-jing. Now there are 2,569 certified volunteers in 88 liaison offices across the country; they have helped more than 750,000 people, of all races and religions.

In response, Master Cheng Yen gave this message to the volunteers: "This is certainly recognition for Tzu Chi volunteers. You are the ones who have done all the work and I am very moved by your contribution. You turned dialysis patients into volunteers, you transformed their lives. I am very thankful to all of you."

As one of its next projects, the foundation is planning to build a Dialysis and Education Centre in the near future to help more people who are suffering.

On the northwest coast of peninsular Malaysia, Penang state has a population of 1.5 million people, the eighth most populous in the country. It is highly urbanized and industrialized and has a great diversity of ethnicity, culture, language and religion.