



PINGTUNG POSSE POSE

Students from the Kaohsiung American School pose for photographs during a field trip at an Aboriginal village in Pingtung County on Dec. 21.

PHOTO: HOU CHEN-CHUAN, TAIPEI TIMES



PIGEON POST

Discovery Travel, Living Channel looking for TV host

MEDIA

Attention all aspiring TV show hosts! The Discovery Travel and Living Channel are looking for a co-host to join Janet Hsieh, the host of *Fun Taiwan*, to explore the country for one episode. The program is available all over Asia. People of all nationalities, professions and ages are welcome to apply. Mandarin proficiency is beneficial, but not necessary. The episodes may be filmed anywhere in Taiwan and the filming could take five to seven days. Interested candidates can e-mail a brief personal biography to zoyku@viscreator.com.

Foreign assistance center opens in Hsinchu

OPENING

The country's first local government-run foreign assistance center was inaugurated on Dec. 17 in Hsinchu City, offering consultancy services to foreign visitors and residents. At the inauguration ceremony, Hsinchu Mayor Lin Junq-tzer (林政則) expressed his gratitude to the Research, Development and Evaluation Commission (RDEC), which offered financial and manpower support for the center. He also thanked Hsinchu-based National Tsinghua University for allowing its students to volunteer at the center to help foreigners with information about sightseeing, residency and investment, medical treatment, traffic, cultural activities and education in Taiwan. Lin said he hoped the new facility would become a model for other cities and counties, while RDEC Minister Jiang Yi-huah (江宜輝) said at the opening ceremony that other cities and counties had shown interest in establishing centers of their own. Rowena Lines, principal at the Hsinchu Holland International School, praised Hsinchu as the most foreigner-friendly city in Taiwan and thanked the mayor for his efforts to build a bilingual living environment.

STAFF WRITER, WITH CNA

Taipei City's English services lack luster

SAY WHAT? Some blame limited budgets for the failure of the city to make itself fully English-friendly. Others claim the practice of farming out is the real problem

BY MO YAN-CHIH
STAFF REPORTER

As Taiwan's capital and an international metropolis, Taipei City provides better English-language service than most places in Taiwan and enhancing the bilingual environment has been a major goal of the Taipei City Government.

Efforts to improve the city's English environment over the past several years included synchronizing English street names and road signs and relaunching its official English Web site (english.taipei.gov.tw) in 2003 under then-mayor Ma Ying-jeou (馬英九) to provide information to the expatriate community in Taipei.

A closer look at recent activities held to promote tourism, however, found a lack of English-language information for the

foreign community.

The latest event organized earlier this month by Taipei City's Commerce Office, for example, promoted the food service industry in the city and launched a Web site containing basic information on more than 500 restaurants, including addresses, directions and maps—all in Chinese.

"The Web site is a huge database of great restaurants in the city and allows locals and foreigners to obtain information on delicious food in the city in a convenient way," office director Liu Chia-chun (劉佳均) said.

The office said that the database was in Chinese and English. However, no English-language information can be found on the site (www.foodintaipei.com.tw). Asked about the lack of English-language

information, Chiang Yi-hua (江宜輝), a division chief at the office, said the office was not responsible for putting together the content of the Web site.

"I am not clear about the English version of the Web site. We contracted out the Web site and you should therefore ask the company about it," she told the *Taipei Times*.

The contractor, Corporate Synergy Development Center, said the English-language information would soon be available.

Another event held by the city government in September also targeting local and foreign tourists, the Taipei Hotel Festival, was another example of the city's ignoring of foreign visitors and expatriates. The festival, organized by Taipei City's Department of

Information and Tourism, sought to attract local and foreign tourists to Taipei and encourage them to spend the nights at hotels. Various promotional activities, including discounts of as much as 55 percent at more than 30 hotels, were offered during the month-long event. However, no English versions of the promotional brochures or coupon booklets were offered.

Asked for comment, Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) Taipei City Councilor Chen Yu-mei (陳玉梅) criticized the department for its limited approach.

"How many Taipei City or Taipei County residents would go spend a night in a hotel in Taipei City? Targeting only the local market and ignoring foreign visitors is a total waste of money," she said.

Huang Chiu-chuan (黃修全), a division chief at the department, acknowledged the department's

failure to address foreign visitors' needs by providing English-language information, adding that the department would expand the scale of the festival next year and offer English information to foreigners.

"It's true that we did not advertise the event to the foreign community [living] in Taiwan or foreign visitors. We mainly targeted local residents this year because of a limited budget," he said.

Chen said the city government should not blame the budget. The department's bad habit of contracting out activities to private companies, she said, was the reason behind the poorly designed events. She urged the city government to put greater effort into promoting the city to the foreign community by improving its English-language environment.

Taipei Mayor Hau Lung-bin (郝龍斌) has acknowledged that the

English-language information offered by the city government is insufficient and has promised to demand that all departments provide more English information to meet foreigners' needs. Hau also promised to improve the quality of its English Web site by recruiting more staff to manage it.

Chen Chun-nan (陳俊男), a division chief at Taipei City's Department of Information Technology, said the English Web site is maintained by two English editors and carries two stories daily.

Chen said the department was focusing its efforts on avoiding grammatical errors, adding that with an annual budget of NT\$2.2 million (US\$66,500), it was difficult to increase or ameliorate the service. The department will seek to create a support team to improve the quality of the Web site and demand that all departments provide English-language press releases for the Web site.



Reverend Robert Crawford, left, receives a certificate from Nantou County Commissioner Lee Chao-ching in Nantou County last Wednesday.

PHOTO: CNA

US priest receives honorary citizenship for decades of work

STAFF WRITER, WITH CNA

Seventy-four-year-old US Catholic priest Robert Crawford was granted honorary citizenship by Nantou County last Wednesday in recognition of his decades of work to provide care and services for mentally and physically challenged people.

Nantou County Commissioner Lee Chao-ching (李朝卿) presented the honorary citizenship certificate to Crawford at county hall, citing the priest's devotion to equipping disabled young people with basic living skills.

Crawford first came to Taiwan in 1961 as a missionary, and since then has been devoting his efforts to social welfare work.

In 1988, Crawford joined efforts to establish an educational center in Changhua County for people with mental disabilities, and in 1992 founded a similar facility in Puli Township (埔里), Nantou County.

In 2004, the priest established a training center for persons with multiple disabilities at the Holy Rosary Church in Nantou's Chushan Township (竹山). He started a daycare service, basic living skills training and home education for mentally and physically challenged youth over the age of 15.

Crawford, also known by the Chinese name Yu Jen-teh (游仁德), said his efforts to establish and operate educational facilities for people with mental disabilities was inspired by his own brother who suffers from Down Syndrome.

As special education programs in Taiwan cater mainly to teenagers and children, Crawford said, he founded the Rosary training center to help those who are older but could not manage their daily routines.

Foreign 'white collar workers' grade life in Taiwan

TELL US: Despite a need for improvement in a number of sectors, the satisfaction level of foreigners living in Taiwan continues to grow, reaching 49 percent this year

BY SHIH HSIU-CHUAN
STAFF REPORTER

A government-commissioned survey released last week showed that foreign nationals in Taiwan gave the nation a score of 87 for overall satisfaction with Taiwanese hospitality, the highest score in the 36 items examining the country's living environment for foreigners.

A lower score was given to the bilingual signs category, with overall satisfaction for bilingual markings on the packaging of various products receiving the lowest score, at 58 points, the survey showed.

The survey polled what it called "white-collar foreign workers" living in the country, a bit of a departure from past surveys, which polled foreigners coming to Taiwan for travel, study or business.

Asked why this year's survey limited itself to "white-collar foreign workers," Sung Yu-hsieh (宋餘俠), deputy minister of the Research, Development and Evaluation Commission, said the survey would serve as a reference for the government to bring the living environment for foreigners in line with international standards.

"The purpose of the survey was

to attract more international talent," he said. "Foreigners working on construction sites or working as housemaids come to Taiwan through specific channels and their opinion is solicited by the Council of Labor Affairs from time to time."

Government statistics showed that 373,190 foreign workers were employed in the country by the end of October, while the commission said the population of white-collar foreign workers was estimated at 18,645.

Sung said that regardless of which groups were targeted in the survey, foreign nationals' overall satisfaction with the country's living environment continued to increase, from 39 percent in 2006, 40 percent last year and 49 percent this year.

From a maximum of 100 points, the overall satisfaction rate this year was 67.9 points, he said.

The survey comprised seven categories. An average score of 69.1 was received for the "satisfaction with overall government performance" category, 66.1 for "overall satisfaction with bilingual signage," 65.8 for "overall satisfaction with bilingual Web sites," 64.9

for "overall satisfaction with emergency assistance information," 67.2 for "overall satisfaction with service facilities for foreigners," 87 for "overall satisfaction with Taiwanese friendliness toward foreigners" and 82.2 for "overall satisfaction with social cohesion."

Respondents found bilingual Web sites and bilingual signage most unsatisfactory.

For bilingual signage, the highest score (66.1 points) was given to hospitals and clinics, followed by financial institutions, government agencies and department stores, as well as schools, hotels, restaurants and sightseeing spots.

Lung Wen-bin (龍文斌), a counselor at Shih Hsin University commissioned by the commission to conduct the survey, said the lack of bilingual markings on food products, inadequate descriptions on the country of origin and contents of food products or Chinese markings covering other markings on imported food items were most troubling.

Respondents gave 58 points to bilingual markings on food products.

Sung said different spellings on various road signs resulting from



A road sign that translates "White Goose Village" as just "Village" is pictured on Provincial Highway No. 9 in Ilan County on Dec. 3.

PHOTO: KUO YEN-HUI, TAIPEI TIMES

the adoption of different Chinese Romanization was expected to be resolved as the Ministry of Education has recently drawn up plans to replace Tongyong Pinyin with Hanyu Pinyin, starting next year.

On Dec 18, Premier Liu Chao-shuan (劉兆玄) approved the amendment to the Guidelines of Chinese Phonetic Spelling Usage (中文譯音使用原則), reversing a policy adopted by the former Democratic Progressive Party (DPP)

government. The DPP government enacted a guideline in 2002 stipulating that the official Romanization system in the country was Tongyong Pinyin.

Also receiving low scores in the survey were items under the "emergency assistance information" category.

Respondents gave less than 65 points to English signage at police stations, the English proficiency of foreign affairs police and emergency medical personnel, as well

as the quality of service at fire departments and police stations.

Asked whether they adapted well to Taiwan, respondents gave an average of 82 points.

"While there results show that Taiwan receives high marks for friendliness toward foreigners, it also shows there is still plenty of room for improvement when it comes to bilingual facilities and communication abilities," Sung said.

Regarding service quality provided by the government, the Information for Foreigners Web site (iff.immigration.gov.tw) and the 24-hour hotline (0800-024-111) received an average satisfaction score of 71 points, but more than 50 percent of respondents said they were "completely unaware of the [existence of those] services."

Sung said the hotline service, which provides foreigners 24-hour, toll-free service, was offered in Chinese, English and Japanese, to help them resolve problems in areas such as medical treatment, visas, housing, employment, taxation and insurance.

The survey was conducted in person between Aug. 8 and Sept. 9, Sung said. A total of 1,088 valid samples were received with a confidence level of 95 percent and a 3 percent margin of error.