



CLA calls for equal treatment of local and foreign workers

ARTICLE 42: The CLA is trying to stop the practice of forcing local workers to take unpaid leave while foreigners work full-time

BY **SHELLEY HUANG**
STAFF REPORTER

The Council of Labor Affairs recently issued official letters to industrial associations and local governments to emphasize that Taiwanese nationals and foreign workers who have similar jobs should not be treated differently.

The council cited Article 42 of the Employment Service Act (就業服務法), which says that no employment of foreign workers may jeopardize employment opportunities for nationals, their employment terms, economic development or social stability.

FAILURES

The council recently drew widespread criticism for failing to protect the jobs of Taiwanese, who are often forced to take unpaid leave during production slowdowns, while foreign workers keep regular working hours because their salaries are lower.

The council said the act would only apply to Taiwanese nationals and foreign workers who have similar job descriptions.

Under the same working conditions, if a Taiwanese national was told to take unpaid leave or was laid off while a foreign worker kept his or her job, it would be a violation of the act and the employer could face a fine.

INVESTIGATIONS

Local labor bureaus will send officials to investigate if they receive complaints from workers reporting employer violations.

Violators of the act will be fined between NT\$60,000 and NT\$300,000.

In related news, the council intends to amend regulations that require manufacturers to import foreign laborers within six months of gaining approval.

A council official said that under the current Employment Service Act, manufacturers are required to bring in foreign workers within six months of the approval, although some flexibility is allowed under special circumstances.

Some manufacturers recently petitioned the council to extend the six-month period, saying they had obtained approval last year to import workers.

But because of the economic slowdown, their demand for workers was not that urgent.

In response, the official said the council was drafting a plan to extend the six-month period on condition that the rights of local laborers is not compromised.

This means that "those employers should not lay off local laborers during the extended period," the official said.

ADDITIONAL REPORTING BY CHA



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Foreigners still confused about consumer vouchers

QUALIFIED? Foreigners who hold a valid ARC and are married to a Taiwanese national who has a household registration will have voucher notices mailed to them

BY **LOA IOK-SIN**
STAFF REPORTER

With many foreign residents still confused about who qualifies to receive the NT\$3,600 consumer vouchers that will begin to be issued on Sunday and where to obtain them, the National Immigration Agency (NIA) set up a hotline and created a Web page to answer questions.

"Which kinds of residents are getting a voucher? Just those who are here on resident visas, or do work-visa people who've been here a year also qualify?" Jason Cox, a US citizen married to a Taiwanese living and working in

southern Taiwan on an Alien Resident Certificate (ARC), asked in an e-mail to the *Taipei Times*

Cox was not the only foreign resident to ask this question — and in fact, he belongs to exactly the category of foreigners who are entitled to get consumer vouchers.

"Any foreign resident [with a valid ARC as of Dec. 31], whose spouse is a Taiwanese national with valid household registration in the country is entitled to receive the consumer vouchers," the NIA said on its Web page.

The agency said that foreign residents married to Taiwanese

nationals may still get the vouchers if his or her residency is still valid even after the death of the Taiwanese spouse.

"Where do we go to pick up the vouchers?" Cox asked.

"A qualified foreign resident may bring his or her ARC, the voucher notice and his or her personal seal to the distribution station designated on the notice to get the vouchers," an NIA official surnamed Lin (林) who answered the NIA hotline said.

"If the foreign resident is unable to get the vouchers in person, he or she may ask a Taiwanese national to get his or her vouchers on his or her behalf," Lin said. "The foreign resident must give written authorization by filling out the power of attorney attached to the notice, affix his or her personal seal on it and

hand the document along with his or her ARC to the Taiwanese national."

In the case where a qualified foreign national is unable to pick up the vouchers in person or arrange for someone else to get it for them on Sunday, "they may still get their vouchers at post offices designated on the notice between Feb. 7 and Apr. 30," Lin said.

The set of vouchers consists of six NT\$500 notes and three NT\$200, for a total of NT\$3,600. Each voucher may be used individually. No change will be given if the full sum is not used.

Additional information is available at http://aht.immigration.gov.tw/voucher/nia_2.html, the Ministry of the Interior's consumer voucher toll-free hotline at 0800-883-600, or the NIA hotline at (02) 2331-9597.



Swedish actor Ludvig Palmell, right, Taiwanese actor Huang Ho, left, and director Hakon Liu pose in front of the UFO houses in Sanchi, Taipei County.

PHOTO: CHEN YI-CHUAN, TAIPEI TIMES

Two cultures fuel idea behind film

BY **SHELLEY SHAN**
STAFF REPORTER

Swedish single mom Kicki recently decided to bring her 16-year-old son Viktor to Taiwan on vacation. However, she didn't tell him that they came here mainly to meet Mr Chang, a Taiwanese man she had been dating online for some time. While Kicki was determined to find the man she fell in love with in cyberspace, Viktor wandered around the streets of Taipei and met 18-year-old Didi, whose friendship eventually led Viktor and his mother on a journey that was beyond their imagination.

The inspiration for a melodrama such as this would have to be fictitious for some people. But for director Hakon Liu (劉漢威), the film *Miss Kicki* (親親心) was actually his own life experience as he grew up dealing with two different cultures.

"My father is Chinese and my mother is Norwegian," he said. "And doing this kind of culturally half-and-half movie in Taiwan actually feels whole, a full-circle, because I am of two cultures."

Liu first made his name known in the film community with dozens of short films. One of them, *Lucky Blue* (幸運藍), won the award for best short film at the 2007 Gothenburg Film Festival.

The creation of *Miss Kicki*, Liu's first feature-length project, was not only inspired by cultural differences. It was also inspired by Liu's memories of his childhood and teenage years.

Liu spent a large portion of his life in Taiwan before leaving for Norway when he was 17. He said the Taiwan he remembered was mostly rural scenes in Pingtung. His family lived beside a bell-shaped fruit orchard with a Taiwan Sugar Corp (台糖) railroad nearby. Close to the railway were some abandoned houses where Liu and his friends would go to take pictures and write graffiti on the walls.

"Taipei in my childhood was a very exotic and expensive place," he said. "The AsiaWorld Department Store (環亞百貨) was like the most exclusive and luxurious place in town. I thought if I wanted to meet stars like Aaron Kwok (郭富城), I needed to go there."

He also remembered kids in school pointing at him and calling him a foreigner. Whenever that happened, he would always fire back by calling them *Taiwanren* (Taiwanese) in Mandarin.

"I think many directors and artists will do what I do, that somehow you can't avoid childhood," Liu said. "When I close my eyes and I smell things from my childhood, I get a sense of things, even though I am writing things for a Swedish woman."

"I would not portray a character without having certain parts of myself in him or her," he said, adding that they included things that had actually happened and

those he made up.

Liu also spent one year studying at Taichung American School, where there was a small Norwegian school on the same campus. Liu said memories of living in the school dormitory could be the subject of another film.

"It [the school] was an isolated place with a lot of foreigners and a bunch of rich Taiwanese kids," he said. "That was when I started falling in love and doing stuff like running out in the middle of the night, stealing motorcycles and giving them back later."

Working in Sweden now, Liu still returns to Taiwan a couple of times a year to visit his family in Pingtung, where he also hangs out with friends, watches the rice fields wave in the wind, listens to the sound of scooters and enjoys the quietness of the countryside.

Liu is aware of the changes in Taiwan, but he said he was more intrigued by the contrast of old and new, such as the one between Taipei 101 and the shabby hotels in the Wanhua District in Taipei.

About 90 percent of the settings in *Miss Kicki* were shot in Taiwan, ranging from typical tourist spots like Sun Moon Lake (日月潭) to everyday places like the South Airport Night Market in Wanhua (南機場夜市) or the quixotic UFO houses (飛碟屋) in Sanchih (三芝), Taipei County.

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— Hakon Liu, director



PINGTUNG POSSE POSE

Two American English teachers, center back, pose with students at Wulong Elementary School in Wulong Village, Pingtung County, on Jan 4. The pair teach English at the school for free.

PHOTO: YEH YUNG-CHIEN, TAIPEI TIMES

Dems Abroad build momentum

BY **DAVID CHEN**
STAFF REPORTER

With the election of US president-elect Barack Obama, Taiwan's chapter of Democrats Abroad, the official overseas branch of the US Democratic Party, is seeking to build on momentum gained from a fresh wave of supporters.

Democrats Abroad Taiwan (DA Taiwan) will hold a meeting on Saturday at the Yanji Street branch of Larry's Pizza in Taipei to welcome new members and elect a new board of directors, a key requirement for the group to upgrade its status from a "non-voting" to a "voting" country committee.

With voting status, DA Taiwan would be able to participate in elections within the international Democrats' Abroad organization, which is represented as a state party at the Democratic National Convention and holds its own caucuses for the Democratic presidential primaries. "Membership is at an all-time

high, and this is the right time for us to do this," John Eastwood, the group's chairman, said in a recent press release. "A few years ago it was a real struggle, but there's a massive new energy we've seen with the Dems [Democrats] retaking both houses of Congress in 2006 and now with the inspiration the Obama campaign gave many Americans."

DA Taiwan's membership "quintupled" thanks to the intense interest in Obama's campaign, Eastwood said in an interview with the *Taipei Times*. He declined to reveal the group's exact membership numbers, but said that for the first time "in memory," DA Taiwan held election-viewing events outside of Taipei. Its events in Taichung (台中) and Kaohsiung (高雄) each attracted hundreds of Obama supporters, he said.

One of Democrats Abroad's mandates is to assist US citizens living abroad by providing absentee ballot request forms and

registration information, regardless of their political affiliation, Eastwood said.

"One of the areas where we are of the most service is that we're able to fulfill [every US citizen's] right to vote," he said.

Joining Democrats Abroad, which is open to any US citizen over the age of 18, also gives people the chance to "have a voice" and participate in the representation process of the Democratic Party, said Tammy Turner, an executive committee member at DA Taiwan for 15 years.

Like all Democrats Abroad country committees around the world, members in Taiwan can contribute to the Democratic Party's policymaking by formulating platforms on issues, which are presented to party leadership, she said.

Members decide what to cover based on their interests and concerns, whether broader issues like the environment or health care, or

issues affecting US citizens: the US role in China-Taiwan relations or tax rules for US citizens living abroad.

With a new administration in the White House, DA Taiwan is hoping its membership will keep growing.

"Especially at this juncture, we need a lot of thinking from a lot of people," she said.

The meeting's agenda on Saturday also includes instating a new set of bylaws to govern the committee, as well as discussing future projects and social events.

Those interested in joining DA Taiwan should first register online at www.democratsabroad.org, and those who have questions about this Saturday's meeting or are interested in running for a position on the board should contact John Eastwood at democratsabroadtaiwan@gmail.com.

The meeting starts at 2pm at Larry's Pizza, located at 2, Lane 137, Yanji St (台北市延吉街137巷2號).

Manila: 2,500 Philippine workers lose Taiwan jobs

AFP, MANILA

At least 2,500 Philippine workers have lost their jobs in Taiwan amid the global economic slowdown and more are expected to be sent home in the coming months, the Philippine government said last week.

A total of 2,500 Filipinos were laid off by factories in Taiwan adjusting to lower global demand, records kept by the Philippine Labor Department's Philippine

Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) showed.

The government agency expects the number to double this year unless there is a rapid global recovery — which seems unlikely at the moment.

Some 8 million Filipinos work or live abroad, remitting an estimated US\$15 billion to their families back home in an effort that helps keep the Philippines economy afloat. Taiwan employed some 90,000

Filipinos at the start of the crisis last year, said Jennifer Manalili, head of the POEA.

More than 100 were sent home last month, most of them workers in Taiwan's microchip factories.

Philippine Labor Secretary Mariano Roque told reporters that Manila would be sending a team to Taiwan to help the Filipinos who lost their factory jobs.

"In the next two weeks, we

will deploy an advance reintegration team to Taiwan to assist the affected OFWs [overseas Philippine workers]," Roque said.

The team would canvass employers "for possible redeployment before they return to the country, or referrals to other companies there," he said.

Manalili said Manila considers Taiwan's export manufacturing sector to be "vulnerable" as the financial crisis deepens.