



## PIGEON POST

## Taichung canceling foreign workers' contracts



Over the past two months, an average of 20 foreign workers per day have had their work contracts in Taichung County terminated, the county's Department of Labor Affairs said on Saturday. Since October, a growing number of foreign workers have been let go because of the economic downturn, department director Chang Ta-chun (張大春) said. The department will offer assistance to those workers if necessary, he said. Council of Labor Affairs statistics show that the nation has about 370,000 foreign workers. With the nation's unemployment rate rising to 5.03 percent in December, some labor groups have called for a reduction in the quote on foreign workers to give more employment opportunities to local workers, council officials recently said.

## Taiwan scholarship program accepting applications



The Scholarship Program of Taiwan is accepting applications from now until March 31, the Ministry of Education, the National Science Council, the Ministry of Economic Affairs and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) announced on Sunday. Citizens of selected countries who are interested in obtaining a degree or studying Mandarin in Taiwan are welcome to apply. Interested applicants can inquire local Republic of China embassies or representative offices or go to [www.edu.tw/bicer](http://www.edu.tw/bicer) or MOFA's Web site at [www.mofa.gov.tw](http://www.mofa.gov.tw) for further information. E-mail inquiries can be sent to [tsp@deps.ntnu.edu.tw](mailto:tsp@deps.ntnu.edu.tw). A total of 427 scholarships will be awarded.

## Hsinchu police rewarded with Wang Chien-ming baseball



During the Lunar New Year holidays, the Hsinchu office of the National Immigration Agency (NIA) received a baseball signed by New York Yankees pitcher Wang Chien-ming (王建民) as a sign of gratitude for helping an American woman retrieve a lost passport. On Monday last week around 10.30pm, an American woman reported the loss of her mother's passport to the NIA's Hsinchu office. The woman said she, her husband and her mother had been out shopping, and that her mother had lost her wallet in a taxi on their way home. Among other important items things, the wallet contained her passport. The mother was frantic because she had to return to South Korea, where she is working as a teacher, on a flight that she had already booked for last Wednesday. Upon receiving the report, the NIA accompanied the woman to the Nanmen police station in Hsinchu to file a missing passport report. The officer in charge asked staff that were off duty to contact taxi companies to look for the lost wallet. Some officers even asked friends to assist in the search. As a result, the wallet was found intact with all its contents by 6am the next day. As a sign of gratitude, the woman's husband presented the Hsinchu police station with a baseball that had been signed by Wang.

STAFF WRITER, WITH CNA



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## Mixed couples divorce in droves

**RED FLAG:** The murder of a Southeast Asian wife by her Taiwanese husband in order to collect insurance money in 2006 frightened a lot of spouses from Southeast Asia

BY JENNY W. HSU  
STAFF REPORTER

Unrealistic expectations and short periods of courtship have contributed to a high divorce rate among mixed-nationality couples in the country, a Catholic charity organization said, adding that a famous murder case three years ago has also prompted more foreign brides, especially those from Southeast Asian countries, to divorce their Taiwanese husbands and return to their home countries.

Recent statistics released by the Ministry of the Interior (MOI) showed that mixed-ethnicity newlyweds dropped by 14 percent last year to 21,729 couples. Close to 60 percent of the marriages have one spouse from China, Hong Kong or Macau.

The number of marriages across

the nation between Taiwanese and Southeast Asian nationals also dropped by 943 couples last year.

A report in the *Liberty Times* (the *Taipei Times*' sister paper) stated that in Kaohsiung County last year, 7,862 mixed-nationality couples tied the knot, while 3,207 couples called it quits, a ratio of 40.79 percent.

However, the percentage of divorce was 81.74 for marriages between Taiwanese men and Southeast Asian women.

More women from Vietnam, Indonesia, Thailand and Cambodia are choosing to leave their Taiwanese husbands to go home, said Lee Bi-chi (李碧琪), a supervisor at the Good Shepherd Sisters' new immigrant outreach program in Kaohsiung.

The MOI said that tighter control

measures, such as a more thorough interview process and a background check, have resulted in the decline of interracial marriages.

But Lee said the drop could have also been prompted by the infamous railroad murder case in which a husband in Pingtung allegedly killed his Vietnamese wife for NT\$70 million in insurance money by sabotaging railroad tracks in March 2006.

Prosecutors said when the wife did not die from the derailment, the husband injected her with snake poison to kill her.

That story, Lee said, served as a red flag and pushed many Vietnamese women, who were skeptical about their marriages to Taiwanese men, over the edge.

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— Tran, Vietnamese woman married to a Taiwanese man

brighter future for their families. They were often promised and expect that their Taiwanese husbands would financially support their families back home. Usually when the promise is broken, frictions begin,” Lee said, adding that some women maintain unrealistic expectations before their arrival in Taiwan.

Huang Shun-chao (黃順超), general commander of National Immigration Agency's Operation Affairs 2nd Corp, said he has handled cases where Taiwanese men divorce their foreign wives after they have given birth to sons to carry on the Taiwanese family's name.

"That's exactly what happened to my friend. Her husband just kicked her out and forced her to divorce him after her son turned one year old," said a Vietnamese woman surnamed Tran, who married a Taiwanese man six years ago.

Tran said she has heard many sad stories where her "sisters" have been mistreated by their Taiwanese husbands.

"Right now, many people would rather go home and earn money while they are still young instead of staying in Taiwan. Perhaps they will get a chance to marry again, but never Taiwanese men again," she said.



## TIBETAN NEW YEAR

Tibetan immigrants celebrate the Lunar New Year in Taoyuan City on Saturday.

PHOTO: CNA

## Foreign students in Taiwan increase in last academic year

## MANDARIN STUDIES:

More than 18,000 students came to Taiwan to study, with most coming from Japan, the US, Indonesia, South Korea and Vietnam

BY FLORA WANG  
STAFF REPORTER

The number of international students studying in Taiwan's universities slightly increased over the past year, the Ministry of Education (MOE) said on Sunday.

The number of international students, including those who enrolled in undergraduate or graduate programs in local universities, those who studied at Mandarin training centers and those who came to Taiwan as exchange students, totaled 18,306 in the last academic year, the ministry's Bureau of International, Cultural and Educational Relations said.

The figure rose by 1,000 compared to the 2007 academic year, the bureau said.

Among the students, 6,258 of them were enrolled in local universities in the last academic year, up from 5,259 students in 2007, the bureau said.

Up to 71 percent of the international students were Asian, while 17 percent, or 1,098 people, came from North, Central or South America, the bureau's statistics showed.

## MAJORITY

The majority of international students who enrolled in local universities came from Vietnam, Malaysia, Indonesia, Japan and the US, the bureau said.

Most of them went to Ming Chuan University, National Taiwan University, National Cheng-chi University, National Cheng Kung University (NCKU) and National Taiwan Normal University (NTNU), the bureau's statistics showed.

A total of 2,225 international students, or 35 percent, were science majors, while 1,574 studied business management, the bureau said.

The number of international students studying at Taiwan's 26 Mandarin training centers increased by 474 to 10,651 people in the last academic year, with 58 percent of the students coming from Asia, the bureau said.

## TOP FIVE

The international students' top five countries of origin were Japan, the US, Indonesia, South Korea and Vietnam, the bureau said.

Of these students, 3,126 of them took Mandarin lessons at NTNU, while 1,064 of them studied Mandarin at Tamkang University, the bureau said.

A great number of international students last year also studied Mandarin at the Chinese Culture University, NCKU and Fu Jen Catholic University, the bureau said.

## Globe-trotting Canadian walks around world to Taiwan

**FOR THE CHILDREN:** Jean Beliveau began walking around the world after experiencing a midlife crisis in Montreal and has walked more than 557,000km through 55 countries

BY MEGGIE LU  
STAFF REPORTER

Canadian-born Jean Beliveau began to contemplate walking around the world in 2000 because of a midlife crisis. Saying that he had never been a traveler before, the 53-year-old has so far trekked through Canada, the US, South America, Africa, Europe, the Middle East, China and recently — Taiwan.

But beyond the 557,000km, 55 countries and 40 pairs of shoes that he has been through, Beliveau has also inspired thousands to answer to the call of peace for children, the cause to which he and his wife dedicated their walk.

"I had a strong urge to change my life ... I used to enjoy my job very much, [but] I thought in 30 years more my life will end and I had a small depression," the former developer in the neon signs industry said in an interview with the *Taipei Times* last month. "We have a strong social system, we are expected to follow a corridor or a labyrinth left or right, but I felt like my freedom was taken and the system was pushing me against a wall, and I wanted to escape."

One day, after Beliveau's routine run around Montreal, he aspired to go and see the different facets of the globe by foot.

"I would prefer to be eaten by lions in Africa than by [the system,] because at least I would have seen a lot of the world, which is a privilege," Beliveau said.

Beliveau secretly planned his trip — which would take more than a decade — for eight months before informing his wife about it, he said.

"Sometimes when people love you, when you explain your dream, they say, 'stay where you are, we love you, maybe you can find another way' and break your dream ... I didn't want that, the plan was too fragile," Beliveau said.

But to Beliveau's surprise and pleasure, when he eventually told his wife that he was to launch his great journey on his 45th birthday, she not only supported it, but also "gave the walk a soul" by suggesting that he dedicate his walk to peace and non-violence for the children of the world, he said.

"We are together in this, I'm not the only walker, she is the strong lady who is pushing the walk," he said.

Armed with a baby trolley that would carry all his belongings — including a sleeping bag, a tent, some clothes and food, a first-aid kit, C\$4,000 (US\$3,215) and his family's support — Beliveau began to walk in August 2000.

The walk was eye-opening — not only has Beliveau hiked mountains, passed through deserts and witnessed the world's richest and most disadvantaged along the way, the French-speaking Montreal native also picked up English, Spanish and Portuguese along the way.

Asked about memorable moments during journey, Beliveau said: "In Peru, the Andes was beautiful. I pushed my [50kg] buggy nearly 5,000 meters [above sea level] ... My highest point was between Chile and Bolivia, which was 4,660 meters; there was no air,

I became skinny and was always cold."

Beliveau then came down to the Atacama Desert, one of the five deserts he has so far encountered.

"[In Africa], I crossed a zone where there were lions. The people advised me to keep walking when I saw lions; you don't show that you are nervous. I didn't actually see the animals [which were hiding in bushes], but I was thinking, I thought I preferred to be eaten by lions than by society, but really I wasn't ready to be eaten at all," he said.

But the best wonders that Beliveau saw were people, he said.

Other than his small amount of cash, Beliveau has been supported by strangers along the way.

"I have been received by some 1,200 families — very rich, very poor, very right, very on the left side," he said. "I'm always culture-shocked; I would think they are wrong, but it is me who is wrong."

"People are born into different 'social bubbles,' which give us our patterns of life, but there are many, many different patterns in the world. After staying with different people, I begin to see like them; I have let my fence down and my heart open," he said.

In Mexico, a local family took Beliveau in, offered him a bed and prepared him tacos for breakfast; a Nigerian doctor gave Beliveau a free health check and minor surgery; and an Indian hospital refilled his first aid kit, he said.

Once in Africa, Beliveau dressed like the locals and ate their food.

"I was like a black guy, I felt very comfortable, it was amazing," he said.

Asked how he had managed to carry on his mission, Beliveau said: "I'm not a strong missionary and I don't claim to change the world ... Sometimes I feel like [if] I don't do nothing; people would do it themselves," he said. "Violence can come from every facet of society, from the family to every social level."

Children are especially vulnerable to violence and exploitation, Beliveau said.

"In many countries, such as [in] Africa and South America, I see many children working to support the society, but societies should support them [instead]," he said.

Advanced countries have a part in this by importing goods or setting up factories in undeveloped countries that extend the exploitation of children, he said, adding: "We are all guilty."

"[The children] work hard for a small amount of food, but we are not concerned about that; we consume and consume, and possess too many things that are not necessary," he said.

But improving children's welfare is not only an issue in third world countries, Beliveau said.

"Happiness is very important. In some countries, children get to go to school, but they are not happy. I don't judge, but some people have many things but are not happy; I saw more smiles in Africa than in many advanced countries" he said.

Other than promoting his walk proactively, "the walk talks by itself," he said.

In Taiwan, a publisher published a book for school children introducing Beliveau and his mission, he said, adding that some universities

have asked him to give talks.

"If with my walk I give people a small moment of reflection, I consider my mission accomplished," he said.

Reflecting back to his midlife crisis in the eighth year of his 11-year walk, Beliveau said: "We [his wife and him] are very happy. It is not an easy job and there is a long way to go, but it is a positive thing to do."

The peace project, however, will be a much longer journey than his walk, he said.

"My real mission will begin," Beliveau said of his return to Canada



Jean Beliveau, center, and Taiwanese walker Lin Ming-te, left, promote environmental protection, peace and non-violence in Taipei on Jan. 8.

PHOTO: LIN CHIA-CHI, TAIPEI TIMES