



PIGEON POST

Students to receive vouchers



Participants in the preliminary examinations of the Test of Proficiency-Huayu this month will receive a gift voucher for entry into the official examinations to be held in May, the Steering Committee for the Test of Proficiency-Huayu said yesterday. The voucher, valued at NT\$1,000, can be used to cover the registration fee for the May examinations, the committee said. Participants in the preliminary examinations will be tested on their Mandarin listening and reading proficiency. The committee said many recipients of the Taiwan Scholarship this academic year are expected to take part in the examinations in May because they are required to present copies of certificates proving they have passed the proficiency test to the Taiwan Scholarship Office by the end of June. Registration for the preliminary examinations will close on Friday.

Vietnamese singer to perform



Acclaimed Vietnamese singer Toan Nguyen will perform 15 concerts from March 14 to March 26 to bring a touch of home to Vietnamese workers and nationals living in Taiwan, the nation's only Vietnamese-language newspaper *Bao Bon Phoung* (四方報) reported. Nguyen is a popular traditional singer from northern Vietnam who has released three albums, the paper's spokesman Liao Yun-chang (廖雲章) said. Liao said the paper often receives essays and poems submitted by their readers and it hopes to invite some of the authors to recite their pieces at the concerts. Those interested can call the paper at (02) 8667-6655 for more information. The paper is also arranging a children's play area at each concert to allow parents to enjoy the music without having to worry about their children, Liao said. *Bao Bon Phoung* is a monthly periodical started in September 2006 by a Taiwanese who studied in Vietnam. The circulation is approximately 32,000. The paper can be purchased at OK Mart or via subscription.

Police arrest human traffickers



Tainan City police announced last Tuesday that they had arrested 18 people in Chiayi City for allegedly abusing eight Indonesian women after smuggling them into Taiwan under false pretences. Tainan City police said they arrested the suspects, who worked for a labor brokerage firm in Chiayi City, after receiving information that the company had smuggled women from Indonesia into the nation under the pretext of getting married to Taiwanese men and then put them to work for low wages. A preliminary investigation discovered that the brokers seized the women's passports and marriage certificates upon their arrival and forced them to sign illegal contracts in which the women agreed to be paid only NT\$2,000 of their nominal NT\$24,000 monthly salary, police said. The brokers also threatened the women, telling them not to go outside on their own.

School holding book sale



Taipei American School's Orphanage Club will hold its annual book sale on Saturday from 10am to 5pm in the lobby and forecourt of the school. Club members have collected thousands of books, including novels and mysteries, biographies, history, philosophy and travel books, cookbooks, books on parenting and children's and young adult's fiction, as well as English-teaching books. There is a huge selection of books on Asia, Taiwan and China, both non-fiction and fiction. Books in Chinese and other languages are also available, as well as magazines and games. In case of rain, the sale will be postponed a week to March 14. Money raised from the sale will provide funding for orphans and other needy children in Taiwan and abroad. The school is located at 800 Zhongshan N Rd, Sec 6, in Tianshu (天母).

STAFF WRITER, WITH CNA

CLA expects fall in number of foreign workers

STAFF WRITER, WITH CNA

The number of foreign blue-collar workers employed across the nation is expected to drop by 30,000 this year as a result of the global economic recession and government measures to combat soaring unemployment, a ranking Council of Labor Affairs (CLA) official said last week.

The CLA passed an amendment on Thursday suspending the import of foreign workers by manufacturers operating three shifts and lowering the cap on the number of foreign workers allowed to work for major manufacturing firms from 30 percent to 20 percent of a company's total work force, Employment and Vocational Training Administration Director-General Chen Yi-min (陳益民) said.

The amendment is scheduled to be implemented next week, Chen said.

Chen said the CLA drafted the amendment because domestic workers were now more willing to work night-shift jobs in the face of rising unemployment and the import of foreign laborers — a supplementary measure — should not affect the rights of domestic workers.

He said because of a decline in orders received by domestic manufacturers as a result of the global economic recession, the number of foreign workers employed in the nation had fallen by 8,400 in December and 9,000 in January. As a result of all these factors, the number of foreign workers employed in the manufacturing sector is expected to fall by 30,000 this year after the amendment takes effect, Chen said.

CLA statistics show that the number of foreign workers in the nation totaled 365,000 at the end of last year.

Transnational weddings decline

ECONOMIC WOES: Tighter immigration controls and the effects of the weak economy have seen the number of Taiwanese marrying foreign spouses fall in the last six years

STAFF WRITER, WITH CNA

The rate of marriages between Taiwanese and foreign nationals has been declining in recent years as a result of a stricter immigration interview system and the effects of a weak economy, the Ministry of the Interior (MOI) and observers said on Friday.

The rate of international marriages had climbed from 15.69 percent in 1998 to 31.86 percent in 2003, MOI statistics showed.

The 2003 figure translates into about one in every three marriages in the nation, with 50 percent of the transnational marriages involving a Chinese spouse, the statistics showed.

However, after 2003 the rate of transnational marriages began declining and by last year it had dropped to 14 percent, with one

in seven marriages being transnational, the statistics showed.

The biggest decline, 16 percent, was recorded in marriages between Taiwanese and Chinese spouses, followed by a 13 percent drop in unions between Taiwanese and Southeast Asian spouses.

The MOI attributed the drop in the transnational marriage rate to a tighter immigration interview system introduced by the government and a comparative improvement in the economies of the home nations of most potential foreign spouses.

The National Immigration Agency has put in place a system under which Chinese spouses are interviewed upon entry into Taiwan, in an attempt to weed out fake marriages. All foreign spouses from Southeast Asian nations are interviewed both in their

home nation and at the point of entry into Taiwan, in accordance with Ministry of Foreign Affairs' regulations.

"Taiwan's sluggish economy has probably also contributed to the decline in the number of cross-border marriages," said Wang Shi-hou (王士豪), an international marriage broker.

"In this time of economic recession, Taiwanese men are showing less interest in marrying foreign women," Wang said, citing the fact that it costs about NT\$300,000 to arrange a marriage with a Vietnamese bride through a marriage broker.

"Therefore, many people are deferring their plans to marry," he said.

Meanwhile, the economic downturn is also dampening the

“In this time of economic recession, Taiwanese men are showing less interest in marrying foreign women.”

— Wang Shi-hou, international marriage broker

a husband, but rather are turning their attention more to Japan and South Korea, he said.

MOI statistics showed that last year 66.7 percent of the Taiwanese women who married non-Taiwanese women chose women from China, Hong Kong and Macau, while 22 percent married Vietnamese wives and 4.4 percent tied the knot with Indonesian women.

Also last year, some 869 Taiwanese women married Japanese men, 621 married men from China, Hong Kong and Macau and 521 tied the knot with Americans, the statistics showed.

The statistics are in line with the so-called “marriage gradient theory” — that men tend to marry women slightly below their own levels of achievement, in terms of education, income and career, and social and economic status, said Wang Yun-tung (王雲東), an assistant professor of Social Work at National Taiwan University.

enthusiasm of foreign women to marry Taiwanese men, as they fear that they may not be able to make ends meet, Wang said. Moreover, with the growth of China's economy in recent years, many Chinese women are no longer seeing Taiwan as a top choice for finding

”

Those who don't study history are doomed to repeat it. So if people forget about it, they will become complacent and, who knows, maybe it could happen again.

— John Rogus, tourist from Connecticut



We are curious why so few people came to the [sit-in] event. Are they not interested in it? If a commemoration like this was to be held in Germany to remember World War II victims, lots of people would be there.

— Daniela and Steffi Meyer, tourists from Germany



I am here [attending the sit-in] because I think this is the most important day in Taiwanese history. Don't you think so? This is not something really talked about so I have to learn about the [228 Incident] on my own from the Internet. I think there are always two sides to the story. I think its good to hold the commemoration, but any country would do the same if they had a tragedy like this in their country.

— Carly Peselnick, student from the US

”

A lot of people don't know about [the 228 Incident] because the KMT doesn't want people to know about it. They are the ones that caused the whole thing, so of course they don't want the world to remember ... The truth has come out, so we look ahead and make sure that it will never happen again.

— Susan Chang, Ohio-based president of the World Federation of Taiwanese Association

228 INCIDENT

Government slammed over 228

Some Taiwanese-Americans who gathered at Liberty Square on Saturday to mark the 62nd anniversary of the 228 Incident said the government's handling of the reconciliation process was counterproductive

BY JENNY W. HSU
STAFF REPORTER

The manner in which the government is handling the reconciliation process with the families of the victims of the 228 Incident is counterproductive and will most likely brew more tension if the administration refuses to take genuine action that shows contrition, said Taiwanese-Americans who gathered at Liberty Square and the 228 Memorial Park on Saturday to mark the 62nd anniversary of the massacre.

May Huang, one of the Taiwanese-Americans, said although none of her family members were harmed in the 228 Incident, “it left a huge wound

on Taiwan's history and it will never heal unless the Chinese Nationalist Party [KMT] stops concealing the truth and takes real steps to pay for their mistakes.”

A Taiwanese-American man surnamed Liu from California said that Taiwan would never become a true democracy unless the government was willing to face the truth.

“Hiding the facts will only trigger more hatred and misunderstanding. Didn't the government say they want to have a peaceful solution to end all the disputes? How do they expect to settle the differences if nothing is

ever talked about,” he said.

More than 1,000 people attended a sit-in held by the Taiwan Association of University Professors on Saturday to remember the bloody massacre carried out by the authoritarian KMT regime on Taiwanese 62 years ago.

The 228 Incident was ignited on Feb. 27, 1947, when government agents assaulted a Taiwanese woman selling cigarettes on the streets of Taipei.

It marked the beginning of the White Terror period during which a large number of intellectuals were murdered, tortured or jailed.

An Israeli student, speaking on

condition of anonymity, said leaving the truth behind would not help Taiwan become a bona fide nation, criticizing the 228 Memorial Museum for providing little information on the massacre and concentrating on external factors that led to the bloodbath.

Spanish student Regina Martinez said she learned about the 228 Incident during her time at the Autonomous University in Madrid.

“I think it is a very sensitive issue,” Martinez said. “I hope the government can recognize the mistake so the entire nation can move on. It is an important piece of Taiwanese historical memory.”

German language demand prompts cultural center to expand

TEUTONIZE YOURSELF: Taipei's German Cultural Center celebrated its 45th anniversary last week by adding a new floor of classrooms equipped with state-of-the-art gadgets

BY JENNY W. HSU
STAFF REPORTER

Increasing demand for quality German language courses has prompted the German Cultural Center in Taipei to expand its operations by adding a new floor of classrooms.

Center director Jurgen Gerbig, a

long-time educator from the Goethe Institute, said the center, Deutsches Kulturzentrum in German, celebrated its 45th anniversary last week.

Established in 1963, the center has been a mecca for German language learners. Located conveniently next to Guting MRT station

and close to two major universities, the center now covers three floors, with the new sixth floor made up mainly of classrooms that are equipped with state-of-the-art gadgets.

Besides the classrooms, the center also houses a library, a self-learning center and an academic

counseling office, which helps Taiwanese students who wish to study in Germany to find the school best suited to their interests and needs. The center often holds other cultural activities, such as movie screening, poetry reading and various speakers talking about an array of subjects, including German literature, art, design and music, Gerbig said.

Standing in front of a picture collage wall mural, Gerbig said the photos best documented how

the center has become a conduit to numerous cultural exchanges and boosted understanding and appreciation between Taiwanese and Germans.

For more information, visit the Web site www.dk-taipei.org.tw.

Deutsches Kulturzentrum Taipei director Jurgen Gerbig stands in front of a photo mural displaying pictures of various events held by the center over the last five years on Thursday.



PHOTO: JENNY W. HSU, TAIPEI TIMES