



## PIGEON POST

### Scholarship seeks to attract international doctoral students

STUDIES

National Tsing Hua University, National Chiao Tung University and the Industrial Technology Research Institute jointly launched a four-year scholarship program last week aimed at attracting international students with a master's degree in the sciences to pursue doctoral studies in Taiwan. International students chosen for the scholarship will receive full tuition and a monthly allowance of US\$900, the institute said. Successful applicants will also be eligible for research and development internships at the institute after completing all of the academic credits for their studies. The students will also receive stipends for research assistantships as part of their dissertation research. The deadline for applications is March 31. Interested applicants can write to [itriphd@itri.org.tw](mailto:itriphd@itri.org.tw), or call (03) 591-7886 for more information.

STAFF WRITER

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

### Make the streets safer for pedestrians

As a frequent visitor to Taiwan and having recently spent four weeks there, I feel compelled to draw attention to the second-class status of pedestrians.

In every town and city in Taiwan, the car is king. If it's got wheels, be it car, motorcycle or bicycle, the poor pedestrian must make room for it. To go for a walk is to embark on an obstacle course and risk your life.

A visitor, if he is from the West, is taking his life in his hands if he attempts to cross the road on a pedestrian crossing, thinking that the traffic will stop for him, because it won't.

Crossing the road, even at traffic lights, is a dangerous operation, because motorcycles will come at you from all directions, including taking short-cuts on the wrong side of the road.

The sidewalk is a dumping ground, not only for parked cars and motorcycles, but for anything that people don't want in their houses. People seem to extend their houses onto the sidewalk and even run businesses there — without a licence, I suspect. I've seen 100mm drain pipes fixed permanently across the sidewalk.

Every section of sidewalk is a different level, making it dangerous for the very young and the old and infirm. I don't know how the disabled and the blind manage the numerous obstructions.

I'm sure there are laws to regulate all of this, but it seems that the authorities — from the very lowly right up to the top — don't pay the slightest heed to these problems.

I suggest that government ministers and local officials step out of their chauffeur-driven limousines and take a walk around Taiwan's cities and towns.

I read an article in your paper about encouraging more foreign visitors to come to Taiwan. In the present economic downturn and with unemployment on the rise, it seems to me that there is a golden opportunity for the government to create public works jobs by using tax dollars to remedy this situation.

Patrick O'Donohue

IF YOU HAVE SUGGESTIONS FOR EVENTS, INTERVIEWS OR TOPICS YOU WOULD LIKE TO SEE COVERED ON THIS PAGE PLEASE SEND YOUR IDEAS TO:

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# Indonesians pursue a better life

**OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS:** Sriwatin has worked in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Taiwan as a caregiver and housekeeper, helping her family buy land back home to grow coffee

BY LOA IOK-SIN  
STAFF REPORTER

Sriwatin's day starts at around 6am, when she gets up to help the 80-year-old mother of her *laobanniang*, or female boss. She helps "A-ma" get dressed and prepares her breakfast.

Before the rest of the family wakes up and gets ready for school or work, Sriwatin has started her daily cleaning routine, beginning with sweeping the floor.

The rest of the day she spends helping her boss in the kitchen and caring for A-ma. Sriwatin helps A-ma take her meals, go out for walks and shower. Before going to bed she does the family's laundry and hangs it out to dry.

Sriwatin is one of around 128,000 Indonesian workers in Taiwan. At age 31, she is married and has one child, who is back home in Indonesia with her husband. Sriwatin came to Taiwan alone four months ago to work as a caregiver. Like many others from Southeast Asian countries, she came in the hope of building a better life for her family.

Figures from the Council of Labor Affairs indicate that 111,000 of

Indonesian workers in Taiwan are employed as caregivers and housekeepers, around 13,000 work on assembly lines and the rest work in agriculture, on fishing boats, or as construction workers.

"Sometimes I get very tired and I take short naps here and there. I've cried a couple of times, too, when I missed my family a lot or when I felt insulted when A-ma yelled at me for something I didn't do," Sriwatin said in an interview earlier this month. "But it's okay, it's no big deal."

One reason Sriwatin can deal with harsh words from A-ma is because her boss knows she isn't at fault and often comforts her, she said. Sriwatin is also determined to make money for her family and says she knows there are many challenges involved.

This isn't Sriwatin's first time working abroad. Before coming to Taiwan, she spent six years in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait working as a housekeeper and caregiver.

"I made some money there and with that money I bought a small plot of land back home and my

husband is growing coffee on it now," Sriwatin said with a smile.

She hopes to spend three years in Taiwan and then go home.

"Hopefully I'll have saved up enough money to do business at home," she said.

Twenty-four-year-old Annie, another Indonesian worker employed as a caregiver, has dreams too.

Her parents make little as farmers and her three siblings are still in school. Her job in Taiwan is helping her support the family.

"I'm from a small farming village not far from Jakarta," Annie said as she waited for a friend outside an Indonesian grocery store near Taipei Railway Station. "I couldn't find a job in Indonesia, so I came to Taiwan."

"This is actually my second time in Taiwan. I worked in Taiwan for two-and-a-half years taking care of an A-ma and went home after she passed away," Annie said. "After staying home for a while I chose to come back to Taiwan about four months ago and I'm taking care of an A-kong [grandfather] this time."

"I've cried a couple of times, too, when I missed my family a lot or when I felt insulted when A-ma yelled at me for something I didn't do."

— Sriwatin, caregiver

The man in Annie's care is hospitalized and Annie stays in the hospital with him.

"My friends and I hang out about once every month, we go shopping or just have fun with other Indonesians," she said. "I like Taiwan a lot because everything is so exciting here."

But there's a downside too, Annie said.

"Things are too expensive in Taiwan," she said. "And for us Muslims,

who don't eat pork, it can be hard to find food."

Observing Muslim practices can be difficult for a lot of Indonesian workers.

Sriwatin is also worried about accidentally eating pork.

"Not long after I started working, I told *laobanniang* about the no-pork rule and said that if she still gives me pork, it would be she who has sinned, not me," Sriwatin said.

Sutini, another caregiver from Indonesia, said she sometimes finds it difficult to observe Ramadan, the ninth month of the Islamic calendar, during which Muslims are not allowed to eat or drink during the day.

"I still need to work and still need to cook for my boss' family during the day" in the month of Ramadan, she said. "So I get very hungry and sometimes I just take a break from observing the fast, but I always make it up later."

Another caregiver who wished to remain anonymous said difficulties because of the cultural and religious differences between Indonesia and Taiwan were inevitable.

"But as long as you can look for help and communicate with your employer," she said, it will work out.



Accompanied by Nantou residents belonging to the Bunun tribe, Matthew Lien, front center, and Liu Kuan-yu, front left, pose for a photograph during their wedding at Hsitou Forest Recreation Park in Nantou County on Saturday.

PHOTO: CNA

## Canadian musician weds in Nantou

**ABORIGINAL WEDDING:** The ceremony started with a Bunun ritual to pray for blessings, followed by singing by Aboriginal students from Xinyi Junior High School

STAFF WRITER, WITH CNA

Canadian environmentalist and musician Matthew Lien and Taiwanese English teacher Liu Kuan-yu (劉冠宇) tied the knot at a traditional Aboriginal wedding in Hsitou (溪頭), Nantou County, on Saturday.

Despite the cold weather and light rain, the ceremony took place at an outdoor theater at Hsitou Forest Recreation Park.

The wedding started with a traditional Bunun ritual to pray for

blessings, followed by Aboriginal songs performed by Bunun students from Xinyi Junior High School in Nantou County.

With the Aboriginal music and the natural scenery as a backdrop, the couple recited their wedding vows, promising to support each other and share their love of Taiwan no matter what difficulties may arise.

Liu and Lien said getting married surrounded by nature, along

with the sounds of birds and the students' singing, was very meaningful for them.

Lien hoped the traditional ritual would bring good fortune to the people of Taiwan.

During the wedding, Lien performed an improvisation on a Native American flute and played the guitar, while singing a song of love to Liu and Mother Nature.

Nantou County Commissioner Lee Chao-ching (李朝卿) and his wife attended the wedding reception to congratulate the couple.

A spokesperson for the Lemidi Hotel (溪頭米堤飯店), where the reception was held, said that Lien

would perform at a charity concert for the Taiwan Fund for Children and Families at Taiwan Democracy Memorial Hall in Taipei on Mar. 28 to raise awareness about helping children from economically disadvantaged families.

Lien is an internationally active environmental activist and musician.

Liu did her master's degree in education in the US.

Liu's father is a board member of the Chunghwa Post Co and her uncle is Miaoli County Commissioner Liu Cheng-hong (劉政鴻).

The couple are expecting a child in two months.

## Spring Bazaar raises funds for community center

**EXPATS UNITE:** About half of 34 booths were manned by foreigners, offering a wide variety of jewelry and crafts

BY JENNY W. HSU  
STAFF REPORTER

More than 200 people visited the Community Services Center's annual Spring Bazaar at the Howard Plaza last Tuesday.

The hotel's lobby was transformed into a bustling marketplace for the fundraiser, with booths selling homemade trinkets and treasures from afar.

Paula Chen, who came up with the idea for the event, said the bazaar was an opportunity for expatriates to have fun and help raise money for the center.

About half of the 34 booths were manned by expatriates, eager to showcase their products, ranging

from jewelry and other handicrafts to clothes and gemstones.

Michele Tang, a Singaporean who grew up in the US and has lived in Taiwan for seven years, set up a booth featuring handmade essentials for children and mothers, including nursing aprons, kids' clothing and other products.

"I get most of my inspiration from my seven-year-old son," Tang said.

### LOCAL MATERIALS

Tine Jensen, from Denmark, who creates a variety of sewn handicrafts, set up a table with small tote bags, pouches and wallets, all hand-stitched and made with fabrics she

finds in Taiwan.

At the other corner of the bazaar was Marie-Louise Ekberg from Sweden, who also uses local materials for her jewelry.

Ekberg started her own business, Formosa Smycken, using the Swedish word for jewelry.

She included the word Formosa in the company name because "this is where I buy all my beads and there is where I started my business," she said.

Other booths included overseas products from businesses owned by expatriates or items expatriates had picked up during their travels.

The Spring Bazaar is one of the few fundraising events organized by the center, Chen said. It doesn't pull in much money for the center's operations, however, because most of the profits from ticket sales go

to the hotel and food for the event, she said.

### ANNUAL AUCTION

The center's biggest fundraiser is its annual charity dinner and auction every September, she said. Last year, the auction brought in more than NT\$2.3 million (US\$67,000).

The center is a non-profit organization whose goal is to provide counseling and other forms of support for the foreign community.

A list of upcoming activities and events, along with information about counseling services can be found at the center's Web site, [www.community.com.tw](http://www.community.com.tw).

Jewelry maker Marie-Louise Ekberg of Sweden displays her handmade necklaces at the Community Services Center's Spring Bazaar last Tuesday. PHOTO: JENNY W. HSU, TAIPEI TIMES



There are some misconceptions about Thai food, she said; the idea that most Thai dishes are spicy is wrong.

"We have every flavor you can think of: from spicy to sweet to sour to salty. There is a taste for everyone," she said.

The week-long festivities will include a demonstration of traditional Thai carving and dessert making, presented by Taipei's Patio Restaurant; a business seminar for those interested in investing in Thailand; and an exhibition on Thailand at Tamkang University.

The events will conclude with classical dance performances by a Thai dance troupe in Taichung, Taoyuan and Taipei on March 20, March 21 and March 22 respectively.

More information on Thailand Week activities is available through the TTEO at its Web site, [www.tteo.org.tw](http://www.tteo.org.tw).

ADDITIONAL REPORTING BY CNA