



## PIGEON POST

### Taipei City prepares naturalization test for foreigners

**SOCIETY** The Taipei City Department of Civil Affairs will hold a naturalization test on July 19. Those interested in taking the test should register with district offices by next Monday, the department said last Wednesday. The department said foreigners or non-native residents who are interested in taking the test should bring their alien resident certificates and one passport photo to register, as well as the NT\$500 fee to complete registration by next Monday. More information on the location of local district offices is available at the Taipei Citizen Hotline at 1999. Test takers can download samples of the latest test questions at [www.ris.gov.tw](http://www.ris.gov.tw).

### Community Service Center announces summer hours

**SOCIETY** The Community Service Center will operate on a half-day basis from 9am to 1pm next month, but will resume normal office hours from 9am to 5pm on Aug. 3. The center said the weekly coffee mornings on Wednesdays, however, would continue throughout the summer break. The number for counseling emergencies during the summer break is 0932-594-578. Meanwhile, Community Service Center Intercultural trainer Amy Liu has written a new book titled *Taiwan A to Z: The Essential Cultural Guide*, which offers insights into Taiwanese culture and provides the necessary information any expatriate in Taiwan should know. Copies of the book are available at the Community Center for NT\$490 each, the center said.

STAFF WRITER, WITH CNA

## Foreign spouses open restaurant

**COMMISSIONER:** The head of Chiayi County attended the opening of the take-out restaurant, saying that his government has done a lot to assist foreign spouses

ingredients used in preparing traditional Southeast Asian cuisine, including lemon grass, coconut milk and *prahoc* — fermented fish paste that is unique to Cambodian food.

STAFF WRITER, WITH CNA

Eight foreign spouses of Taiwanese men in Chiayi County jointly opened a take-out restaurant last Thursday and invited Chiayi County Commissioner Chen Mingwen (陳明文) to try out their food.

The eight women — from Vietnam, Indonesia, Cambodia and China — opened the restaurant to sell boxed lunches and meals typical of Southeast Asia. They set up their business with the assistance of the county government's Department of Social Affairs. To celebrate the restaurant's opening, the women staged a catwalk fashion show in which they displayed traditional clothes from their respective countries. They also introduced various

Chen said the take-out restaurant represents a new partnership between the local government and the county's "new residents."

He said that there were about 13,000 foreign spouses in Chiayi County, making it the third-biggest administrative area in Taiwan in terms of the number of foreign spouses living there.

Chen said that since 2006 the county government has operated a foreign spouse service center to give advice to the foreign spouses.

Over the past four years, the county government has helped 1,351 foreign spouses obtain motorcycle licenses, three acquire licenses to work as professional nurses and helped eight obtain licenses to work as chefs in Chinese restaurants, he said.

## Italy trade office toasts special day

BY JENNY W. HSU  
STAFF REPORTER

In a reception at the Italian Economic, Trade and Cultural Office in Taipei on Friday night, more than 300 guests and dignitaries raised champagne glasses in a toast to celebrate Italy's national day.

In his address, Italian Representative to Taiwan Mario Palma said that although the global economic recession had put a strain on bilateral trade exchanges between Taiwan and Italy, "it seems that the worst is over."

Palma praised the welfare systems in Taiwan and Europe, which he said have helped the public cope with the economic crisis.

He also expressed the hope that despite the economic situation, people would watch out for positive economic signals and trends, which would then lead to the expansion of trade ties between Taiwan and Italy.

Palma, who studied Chinese in Taiwan in 1996, lauded the close cultural relationship between the two countries, such as the participation of Taiwanese

artists and architects in the Venice Biennale, as well as the invitation by the Kaohsiung Metro to Maestro Narcissus Quagliata to erect a Dome of Light at one of the stations.

He also thanked the Taiwanese government and Acer Inc, a Taiwan-based computer company, for offering assistance to earthquake victims in central Italy in April.

Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs David Lin (林永樂) said at the function that bilateral trade last year reached more than US\$4 billion, making Italy Taiwan's fourth-largest trading partner in the EU.

Other substantive relations are also cordial and extensive, he said, citing the example of the signing by Taiwan's Civil Aeronautics Administration and Italy's National Civil Aviation Agency in April of a technical agreement on air transport services.

The agreement increases the number of flights between the two countries to seven per week, and adds a Taipei-Milan route to the existing Taipei-Rome route, Lin said.

## POWs honored at Toroku camp

**WORLD WAR II:** US and British prisoners of war who were held at Gouba Elementary School in Yunlin County say the local residents gave them food and cigarettes

BY MO YAN-CHIH  
STAFF REPORTER

Walking around the quiet, leafy campus of Gouba Elementary School in Douliou (斗六), Yunlin County, it is hard to imagine that the school was once used to house prisoners of war (POW) during World War II.

But from November 1944 until the end of the war, the school was home to the Toroku, or Douliou, POW Camp of the Imperial Japanese Army, or what POWs called "The Schoolhouse Camp." Hundreds of US and British POWs were interned at the site before being moved to Shirakawa in Japan.

The location of the former camp was not confirmed until September 2000 when the Taiwan POW Camps Memorial Society visited the school in a bid to preserve the Japanese-style classrooms.

The original building, however, was torn down in 2003 out of safety concerns. The organization continued to communicate with the school, and was finally granted permission to erect a marble memorial at the site earlier this year.

"We should never forget the past. It's not just a stone that we put up there, it's what it meant for the POWs ... It is also an important piece of history for Taiwan and the local community," said Michael Hurst, director of the organization.

Hurst traveled to the school with members and supporters of the organization on Saturday to commemorate the establishment of the memorial. At the ceremony, he told stories of the former POWs — who were too old to travel to Taiwan for the ceremony — to a group of school students and community members.

"All the surviving POWs are in their 80s or 90s, and it's difficult for them to travel this far, and we don't expect to see them coming

back for memorials in the future," Hurst said.

Although unable to be present at the memorial ceremony on Saturday, several POWs who had lived in the school camp shared their stories via e-mails.

"My work while I was there consisted of taking care of the vegetable garden plants ... we were always hungry and our thoughts were always of survival and getting back home," US Army veteran Carl Pasurka said in an e-mail to the organization.

Raymond Harper of the US Navy said the POWs slept on cement floors in the classrooms and lived on rice and thin soup that only occasionally included vegetables.

Another POW, Alcide Benini of the US Army, described the Japanese commander in the school camp as a "pleasant man," saying he had "probably the best Christmas as a POW" in 1944 because he helped lead church services.

Hurst said most of the POWs in the camp were in terrible physical condition, so they were not worked like slaves, as many were at the infamous "Hell Camp" in Kinkaseki, or Jinguashih (金瓜石), Taipei County. Some said they received good treatment in the camp during their imprisonment.

Gouba Elementary School principal Hsu Ching-hsuen (徐慶勳) said the school tore down the classrooms because of the lack of government subsidies for restoration work. However, he said the school valued what had happened on the school grounds and would pass on the history to its students.

Hsu said it was great to learn that local residents were friendly to the POWs, giving them sweet potatoes and cigarettes.

Still, the time in the school camp, as in the other 14 camps



Michael Hurst, right, and Mark Wilkie of the Taiwan POW Camps Memorial Society lay a wreath at the POW memorial plinth at Gouba Elementary School, Yunlin County, on Saturday.

found in Taiwan, is an unbearable and dark memory for most POWs.

Although not a POW, Arthur Scholl, an 82-year-old US Navy veteran who now lives in Taipei, shared the pain of the POWs and the trauma the war has left them with.

"It's only when I started to associate with the Taiwan POW Society that I was able to tell the stories in the wars," he said.

Scholl talked in private about his experience fighting in World War II in the Philippines, in which he was almost killed on aircraft carrier, but was unable to speak at the ceremony because he was overcome with emotion.

The Japanese listed 4,344 POWs in Taiwan, with 15 POW camps. Except for the camp in Jinguashih, where some of the original structures remain, the other camps have been destroyed almost completely,



The Japanese-style classrooms in Gouba Elementary School of Yunlin County were used to house POWs in 1944 and 1945. The building was torn down in 2003.

Hurst said. The recognition of the sites, however, will continue, he said.

The organization plans to hold a memorial ceremony at the remnants of the walls of Taipei Prison on Jinshan S Road on June 20 to commemorate the POWs who were executed in the old prison. It also plans to erect two more memorials at school

camps in Yunlin County.

The stories of the POWs will be told even though the former POWs who spent part of their lives in Taiwan were unlikely to come to the island to tell their experiences in person.

"Our goal now is to bring their children and grandchildren here, and help them learn the past of their dads and granddad," Hurst said.



### ST HELENA PARADE

Filipinos participate in a parade in honor of St Helena near St Christopher's Church on Zhongshan N Road, Taipei, on May 31.

PHOTO: HUNG MIN-LUNG, TAIPEI TIMES

## UK student takes to dragon boats

**GOOD TIMES:** Deanna Laforet says that Taiwan is a very underrated travel destination and that she plans to tell her friends back home that it is worth coming to Taipei

BY DAN BLOOM  
CONTRIBUTING REPORTER

One of the favorite memories Deanna Laforet will take home with her to the UK will be her participation in the Mandarin Training Center's dragon boat team last month.

"It was so much fun training for the race, and it was even more fun participating in it," said Laforet, who has been in Taiwan for almost a year now. "Where else would I have had such a chance to take part in a cultural festival this way?"

Laforet, in her mid-20s, came to Taiwan to improve her Mandarin after receiving an undergraduate degree in Chinese at a British university.

"I wanted to brush up on my Mandarin and also take the opportunity to live in a different country and try to understand it, at least a bit," she said. "I enrolled in

work experience in this field," she said. "I feel there is certainly too much of a throw-away lifestyle here in Taiwan."

"In terms of environmental awareness and policies, Taiwan unfortunately is not as developed as one would hope," she said. "Fingers crossed that this changes in the near future."

Laforet said two of the things that were particularly important to her this year in Taiwan were "my volunteer work at TEPU, seeing the NGO [non-governmental organization] sector here, being part of it and making a small contribution — and being on that dragon boat race team."

Her time in Taiwan this year was well spent, she said, adding that "the Taiwanese are very friendly and welcoming, and living here has definitely been easy to adapt to and a lot of fun."

When asked what she might tell people in the UK about Taiwan, she said: "That it is worth considering coming to Taipei. I believe Taiwan is a very underrated travel destination and a fantastic insight



Deanna Laforet practices for the dragon boat race in Taipei late last month.

PHOTO COURTESY OF DEANNA LAFORET

into Asia."

"It has beautiful scenery, vibrant cities, interesting Aboriginal cultures and has done some great preservation of Chinese cultural heritage," Laforet said.

## Malays gather in Taipei to celebrate king's 46th birthday

BY JENNY W. HSU  
STAFF REPORTER

More than 120 Malaysian expatriates gathered in Taipei on Saturday to celebrate the 46th birthday of Tuanku Mizan Zainal Abidin, the 13th Yang di-Pertuan Agong, or king, of Malaysia.

The lavish feast, featuring homemade Malay cuisine, was hosted at the residence of the director of the Malaysian Friendship and Trade Center, Dato' Abdullah Mohd Salleh, who led the crowd in a prayer to wish the king a healthy, long life and prosperity for all Malays in Taiwan.

The representative said the celebration was one of the most important holidays in his country to express respect and deference to the king.

Although Taiwan and Malaysia do not share diplomatic ties, he said the trade volume between the two countries continued to grow, with Taiwan now the ninth-biggest trading partner.

Approximately 10,000 Malaysians reside in Taiwan, of which 3,800 are students, he said.

Last year, more than 170,000 Taiwanese tourists visited Malaysia, a slight decrease from the 200,000 in the previous year. The representative said he expected the figure to jump back as the global economy recovers.

Starting next month, Air Asia, the Malaysia-headquartered budget travel company, and Malaysia Airlines are expected to launch two new direct flights between Taipei and Kuala Lumpur, he said.

Mizan, who is the 16th Sultan of the state of Terengganu, became king of Malaysia on Dec. 13, 2006 based on a five-year rotational constitutional monarchy system practiced among the nine Malay rulers.

Ascending the throne at the age of 44, he is the second-youngest Yang di-Pertuan Agong since the office was established in 1957.

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