



PIGEON POST

TAS holding flea market to help poor

SOCIETY The Taipei American School's (TAS) Orphanage Club will hold a Flea Market and Book Sale on Saturday to raise funds for needy children and orphans at home and abroad. The flea market, featuring a wide range of new and used items, will be held from 10am to 3pm, while the book sale will end at 5pm, the club said. Thousands of books will be on offer, from novels, mysteries, biographies and travel books to cookbooks, children's fiction and English-teaching books. Both activities will be held at the TAS campus in Tainan, rain or shine, it said. For more information, contact Richard Arnold at (02) 2873-9900 extension 239 or Mrs Koh at (02) 2874-0902.

Animals Taiwan to host bazaar

SOCIETY Animals Taiwan will hold its first annual Summer Charity Bazaar next Saturday at Yuma Grill from 11am to 3pm, the group said. All proceeds will go to help stray and injured animals, it said. A wide array of items, ranging from antiques to jewelry, homemade bags, kids' products and food, will be sold at the bazaar, it said. Admission is NT\$600, which includes a buffet lunch and a NT\$100 shopping voucher. Tickets to a raffle for various prizes — from hotel accommodations to digital cameras — are on sale. For information, contact Michelle at 0955-360-693 or Liza at 0932-344-687, or e-mail liza@animalstaiwan.org.

More foreigners naturalized: ministry

SOCIETY A total of 13,232 foreigners were naturalized as Republic of China (ROC) citizens last year, an increase of 2,468 over the 2007 figure, the Ministry of the Interior said on Saturday. Last year, 98.1 percent of the naturalized citizens were foreign women married to local men. Close to 81 percent of them were from Vietnam, followed by 9.4 percent from Indonesia and 4.7 percent from Cambodia, ministry statistics showed. Meanwhile, about 780 Taiwanese citizens lost their ROC citizenship last year, up by 64 compared with the 2007 number. The figures showed that 73.5 percent of them made the decision on their own, with 41.9 percent renouncing their citizenship to apply for Japanese citizenship, 20.6 percent seeking Singapore citizenship and 17.8 percent applying for South Korean citizenship.

EETO marks Europe Day

DIPLOMACY The European Economic and Trade Office (EETO) held a reception on Friday to celebrate the 52nd anniversary of Europe Day. Celebrated on May 9, Europe Day marks the anniversary of the Schuman Declaration, in which former French foreign minister Robert Schuman proposed a new form of political arrangement for Europe. Six countries decided in the 1957 Treaty of Rome to build a European Economic Community, which has evolved into the EU. EETO head Guy Ledoux told the members of the diplomatic corps in Taiwan on Friday that "creativity and innovation" were the theme of this year's celebration, and the theme had also been applied to the relations between the EU and Taiwan in promoting science, technology and cultural exchanges. "A major innovation in 2009 will also be the opening of the EU Center," Ledoux said. "This is why we are providing a 1.1 million euro [US\$1.5 million] grant to a consortium of universities led by National Taiwan University with the task of increasing alliances between the EU and the Taiwanese public," Ledoux said.

STAFF WRITER, WITH CNA

Mayor promises help for Kaohsiung Korean School

RISKS: A city councilor urged the government to also work on improving 12 city school buildings and upgrading their fire-fighting facilities to ensure safety

BY FLORA WANG
STAFF REPORTER

Kaohsiung Mayor Chen Chu (陳菊) vowed on Thursday to help the Kaohsiung Korean School renovate its buildings, which were damaged by two earthquakes several years ago.

The mayor made the promise after Kaohsiung City Councilor Chen Li-na (陳麗娜) said that some of the buildings at the Korean school, founded in 1974 at the foot of Shoushan, had tilted because of the earthquakes in 2000 and 2006.

Chen Li-na said the school had been unable to renovate the buildings because of a continuing disagreement at the city's Urban Development Bureau on whether to allow the school to change the category of the land on which it

is located from "construction" to "education" use.

In response, Chen Chu instructed bureau Director-General Lu Wei-ping (盧維屏) to inspect the school buildings to ensure the safety of the school's teaching staff and students.

CITY SCHOOLS

Chen Li-na also urged the city government's Education Bureau to improve the city's 12 school buildings, saying they could collapse if there's an earthquake.

Education Bureau Director-General Tsai Ching-hwa (蔡清華) said the city government had requested a NT\$500 million (US\$15.2 million) budget from the central government for work on the school buildings.

Chen Li-na said that more than half of the buildings of the schools in Kaohsiung City failed to pass a recent inspection of their fire-fighting equipment by the Fire Bureau.

She added that the Education Bureau should also appropriate a budget to improve school fire-fighting equipment.

Students compete in soccer fest

FOREIGN CONTEST: With students from more than 50 nations attending, organizers hoped the event would promote not only the sport but also understanding

BY JENNY W. HSU
STAFF REPORTER

About 90 soccer players from more than 50 countries around the world took part in the Third Taiwan International Students Soccer Festival, which ran from Friday through Sunday at National Taiwan University (NTU) in Taipei, turning the event into a mini version of the World Cup, the organizers said.

Dressed in their school's soccer uniforms, the players braved the scorching sun in an effort to clinch victory for their schools.

"I am sure that these three days of the soccer festival will bring international and domestic students together to speak the common language of soccer and promote not only education but also [the festival], making it one of the most important cross-cultural events in Taiwan," NTU vice president Bau Tzong-ho (包宗和) said at the opening ceremony for the tournament.

The soccer festival could serve as a platform for international students in Taiwan to establish networks and promote understanding, he said.

Pongjiese Korovulavula, who is studying at National Pingtung University of Science and Technology and was the only Fijian student participating in the event, said his team had been practicing for the competition for two hours each day for the past month.

"And yes, of course, we are going to win," he said, smiling, together with his teammate Mwiza Munthali from Malawi, who plays as a striker.

Ivan Parini of Paraguay, captain of the National Chung Hsing University team, said he had no doubt his team would win.

"We joined the festival because of our passion for the game and to have fun," said Parini, who, along with his fellow team members

"We joined the festival because of our passion for the game and to have fun."

— Ivan Parini, Paraguayan student

Paolo Lopez and Jose Baez from Paraguay, said they had been playing soccer all their lives.

Samuel Kim and Jin Myoung-suk from South Korea, who are studying Mandarin at the Fu Jen Catholic University Language Center, said they joined the festival simply because they "like soccer."

All the players were required to take a pledge of fair play before the tournament started.

The festival also had players from Europe, the Caribbean and the South Pacific.



Foreign students play a match in the Third Taiwan International Students Soccer Festival at National Taiwan University on Friday.

PHOTO: LIAO CHEN-HUEI, TAIPEI TIMES

National Taipei University of Technology won first place, followed by National Pingtung University of Science and Technology and Ming Chuan University. In addition to a trophy and medals, the winning team received a cash prize of NT\$8,000, followed by NT\$6,000 and NT\$4,000 for the second and third place teams respectively.

Established by NTU's Foreign Students Association and Office of International Affairs three years ago, the scale of the festival has grown annually, attracting 10 teams from eight universities in northern Taiwan in 2007, 14 teams from 13 universities around the country last year and 15 teams from 14 universities this year.

ADDITIONAL REPORTING BY CNA

Taiwanese boy starting new life with US couple

STAFF WRITER, WITH CNA

A childless couple from the US finally met the four-year-old Taiwanese boy they were adopting last week, with the adoptive mother, Margaret Weddle, hailing the boy "the greatest gift sent by God" on the eve of Mother's Day.

Weddle, 49, told a news conference on Thursday that she and her husband Lonnie, a real estate broker, had grown to love Asian culture and after 26 years of marriage without children, they decided in 2006 to adopt a child from Asia.

Taiwan was their top choice because they had more confidence in its work on adoption.

When the couple saw the pictures of the boy nicknamed Hsiao Hsun (小勳), they decided "he's the one," Weddle said at the Chung Yi Social Welfare Foundation.

The couple said they did not mind when the foundation told them that the boy is "extraordinarily active" — he has attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, or ADHD — and comes from a broken family where only the mother is known.

Foundation executive director Kao Min-tsu (高敏足) said the group had provided the Weddles with everything it knows about

Hsiao Hsun's life and background since the couple first contacted the group in August.

Lonnie Weddle, also 49, said that he had prepared a room at the couple's Virginia home exclusively for Hsiao Hsun and would teach the boy to fish, swim and play to enable him to lead a happy childhood like any American child.

Kao said the foundation would keep track of Hsiao Hsun's life for five years through a cooperative adoption agency in the US.

Over the past three years, the foundation has helped nearly 100 Taiwanese orphans or children from poor, broken families find families, with 90 percent of them being adopted by families abroad, Kao said.



Margaret Weddle and her husband, Lonnie, hold their newly adopted son, four-year-old Hsiao Hsun, on Thursday.

PHOTO COURTESY OF CHUNG YI SOCIAL WELFARE FOUNDATION

French student finds her passion in Taiwan

NEW HOME: Aside from finding fulfillment for her love for martial arts, Sophie Laplace said Taiwan's scenery, food and people have made her consider living here for life

BY FLORA WANG
STAFF REPORTER

Sophie Laplace's romance with Taiwan began when she arrived in the country about five years ago in pursuit of her lifelong passion — martial arts.

Growing up in Paris, Laplace has always been interested in *quan* (拳, Chinese-style boxing) even though her parents considered boxing "too violent."

"I forgot how I became fond of *quan*. I probably developed this interest after watching it on TV and thought it was really cool," she said in fluent Mandarin during an interview with the *Taipei Times* on Friday.

Laplace recalled that as a child, she had watched numerous movies starring martial arts legend Bruce Lee (李小龍), and later watched films by martial arts movie star Jet Li (李連杰).

Her passion for this style of kung fu, characterized by extended hand and leg movement, began to grow at the age of 16.

"I love martial arts, but I prefer Chinese martial arts because I feel more comfortable when practicing its routines," she said.

"[When doing other styles like] boxing and Thai boxing, it is very easy to get injured because you have to fight your opponent and it hurts. They are usually not as concerned about human body structure as Chinese martial arts is,"



Sophie Laplace, a 25-year-old student from France who came to Taiwan to pursue her passion for martial arts, demonstrates a basic *quan* move at National Taiwan University on Friday.

PHOTO: FLORA WANG, TAIPEI TIMES

she said.

She had spent two years learning the Yang-style taichiquan (楊氏太極拳) — a style of hand and leg stretch movement created by Yang

Fu-kuei (楊福魁) in the 19th century — taekwondo and a little boxing when she was in Paris.

But she was eager to find out more about the art of *quan* after

the lessons in Paris.

That was when the idea of coming to Taiwan crossed her mind.

Finding that many martial arts masters had moved to Taiwan from China after the Cultural Revolution, Laplace decided to follow the footsteps of these masters.

The first place she visited in Taipei in pursuit of the masters was Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall, where she met a National Taiwan University (NTU) student who invited Laplace to join the university's *Quan Xiu Club* (拳修社).

Having practiced for four years with the club, Laplace, currently a sophomore at NTU's Department of Forestry and Resource Conservation, was recently elected president of the club.

The election made her the first international student to head the club and one of the very few NTU club presidents who are not Taiwanese nationals.

As president of the club, Laplace leads club members in practicing routines of different styles of *quan* at their weekly gatherings.

"For newcomers, I lead them in practicing basics, while old members practice Taizu Fist (太祖拳), *baguazhang* (八卦掌) and *taiji-quan*," Laplace said.

Laplace, who said she was particularly fond of *taiji-quan* and *baguazhang*, often performs the routines alone or in groups during NTU's school anniversary.

"But I'm still not good enough," she said.

Having lived in Taiwan since the fall of 2004, Laplace's passion

for martial arts has now escalated into a desire to call it her permanent home.

Laplace, 25, said she planned to apply for naturalization within a month because she was afraid she might be forced to leave Taiwan after graduation.

"I would feel more relieved [if I had Taiwanese citizenship] because I would not be driven out of here if anything like war happens," Laplace said.

Her decision to change nationality also had something to do with her love for the food, weather, scenery and people of Taiwan.

"My favorite is moon cakes. During the last Autumn Festival, I ate 80 moon cakes in two weeks," she said.

She also finds the greenery in the country enchanting.

"The shades of green [of Taiwan's trees] is very different from those in France. Trees in France are usually grayish, while trees in Taiwan tend to flourish because of the humidity," she said.

Although she still stands out as an international student, Laplace blends in with her Taiwanese peers very well.

Like many Taiwanese youths, she is crazy about the albums of Jay Chou (周杰倫), Angela Chang (張韶涵), Alan Ko (柯有倫), Jolin Tsai (蔡依林) and A-mei (張惠妹).

"I'm very used to life in Taiwan. There's nothing bad about Taiwan," she said.

"[I want to live in Taiwan] for the rest of my life," she said.



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