



Photo by Theerasak Saksritangee



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**TAIWAN** INFO

## Promoting gender equality

**March 8 marks International Women’s Day, and the Republic of China (Taiwan) has long endeavoured to promote gender equality and women’s rights. The most important milestone is embodied by the recent president-elect Tsai Ing-wen, who will become the first female ROC head of state when inaugurated into office May 20 this year.**

Over the years, Taiwan has been enhancing women’s rights on all fronts and such progress is illustrated by the nation’s fifth-place global ranking based on the criteria of the 2014 Gender Inequality Index by United Nations Development Program.

Other achievements include enactment of the Enforcement Act of Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in 2011, as well as the incorporation of five other United Nations covenants into domestic law to harmonize human rights legislation in Taiwan with international standards. In the area of political participation, women are taking more and more active roles. In the new legislature which was sworn in February 1, there are a total of 43 female legislators out of 113. This equates to 38

percent—the highest in Asia and topping such countries as the Philippines at 27.1, South Korea 16.3 and Japan 11.6, according to the latest statistics released by Switzerland-based Inter-Parliamentary Union.

A similarly high proportion can be seen in the ROC Control and Examination Yuan, which comprise 50 percent and 38 percent female members, respectively. Women have also made significant contribution to the nation’s economy. Female labor force participation rate topped 50 percent for the first time in 2012, and increased slightly to 50.64 percent in 2014.

President-elect Tsai has promised to continue creating a level legislative playing field between the sexes, and ensure women can pursue professional careers and strengthen the nation’s workforce.



*Courtesy of Chunghwas Post*

## POSTAL SERVICE FOR THE DIGITAL AGE

**Chunghwa Post is diversifying its operations to create new sources of revenue while retaining its commitment to serving the needs of society.**

*By Kelly Her, Taiwan Review  
Photos: Huang Chung-hsin*

On an average workday, postman Shi Jun-hua rides his motorcycle about 60 kilometers through the winding roads of sprawling Heping District in central Taiwan's Taichung City to deliver an average of 250 to 300 letters and parcels to some 70 households. Yet despite his hectic schedule, he also finds time to offer assistance to local residents, especially elderly people who live alone or have mobility problems. Cognizant of the challenges that seniors face living in the mountainous area, the 33-year-old frequently volunteers to pick up their groceries and prescriptions.

"Many of my co-workers have been doing this for decades, so I've simply followed suit. I've found that a number of elderly people on my route really need my help," Shi says. "Though it takes me some time to do these chores, seeing their smiling faces when I drop off the items makes it all worthwhile." The postman adds that

locals are quick to return his kindness, offering assistance whenever his motorcycle gets a flat tire or experiences mechanical problems. Shi is among the approximately 9,000 mail carriers employed by Taiwan's national postal service, Chunghwa Post Co. "As a state-owned company, we put a greater emphasis on serving the needs of society than on making a profit," says its chairman, Philip Ong. "For example, a lot of our postal workers have taken the initiative to provide additional services to the senior citizens on their routes, like delivering meals or helping them purchase daily necessities, even though they don't receive any remuneration for doing so. This reflects the customer-focused culture of our organization."

Chunghwa Post operates more than 1,300 post offices throughout Taiwan proper and its offshore islands, and offers a wide range of goods and services beyond mail



and parcel delivery, including banking, remittance processing, life insurance policies and philatelic products. “We have an obligation to ensure that postal and banking services are reasonably accessible to everyone in Taiwan, regardless of where they live or work,” Ong says.

Over the past several decades, Taiwan’s national postal service, like its counterparts across the industrialized world, has faced significant challenges due to the rapid evolution of information and communications technology and rising competition from private couriers. In particular, the company has seen a drastic decline in its core business of delivering physical mail as people increasingly opt to use the Internet and mobile devices for communication.



In 2003, the Republic of China government transformed the national postal agency, the Directorate General of Posts under the Ministry of Transportation and Communications, into a state-owned corporation, Chunghwa Post, in order to boost its capability to respond to changes in economic and social conditions. The company has since enjoyed greater operational flexibility with regard to service scope, manpower recruitment and investment activities. Ong says Chunghwa Post is embracing new technologies in an effort to expand its trusted brand to the digital realm. Accordingly, it has established e-commerce websites, and now makes extensive use of online platforms such as social networking site Facebook and social messaging application Line to promote its products and connect with current and

potential customers. Since launching a Line account in April 2014, the firm has attracted about 7.4 million followers, equivalent to almost half of Taiwan’s roughly 15 million smartphone users. These marketing strategies, the chairman says, have enabled Chunghwa Post to become more responsive to customers’ needs and quickly capitalize on promotional opportunities. Take, for example, an incident that occurred on Aug. 8 last year. Two of the company’s mailboxes in Taipei became a popular tourist attraction overnight after they were knocked into slanted positions, said to resemble two people leaning beside one another, by a falling sign during Typhoon Soudelor.

To make the most of the widespread interest in the tilted mailboxes, the postal company decided not only to produce memorabilia, such as postcards and stickers, but to encourage the public to submit potential designs. People were then invited to vote for their favorites from a shortlist of 30. More than 3,000 people cast their ballots via Line during a designated one-hour voting period. Afterward, the company donated its earnings of NT\$200,000 (US\$6,155) from the sale of the winning items to the Red Cross Society of the Republic of China for relief assistance to typhoon victims. “Our intention [in producing the postcards] was not to make money, but to use event marketing to enhance our image and raise our profile,” Ong explains. “Plus, we were able to use the voting activity to measure the impact of our social media campaigns.”

As part of its efforts to create new sources of revenue, the company has sought to establish a foothold in the e-commerce space in Taiwan. In 2010, it established Post Mall, an online sales platform for local entrepreneurs and small and medium-sized enterprises. Chunghwa Post earns commissions on products sold through the



site. Currently, about 2,000 vendors offering a total of nearly 300,000 items operate on Post Mall, while the number of registered customers on the site has surpassed 200,000.

In January last year, Chunghwa Post launched another website, Post Shop, to convert its consignment business into an e-commerce operation. The company previously operated sales centers in the lobbies of many post offices to sell four categories of merchandise on consignment—beauty and skincare products, commemorative gold and silver coins, everyday household goods, and food items. With the launch of the website, the firm decided to remove these sales outlets and instead install computer kiosks at 188 branches that allow customers to browse and order products from the new website. “By shifting our consignment business into the e-commerce realm, we hope to make our services more convenient for customers while freeing up space in our post offices,” says Lee Kan-hsiang, director of the postal firm’s Department of Mail Business and Operations.

According to Lee, Chunghwa Post’s competitive advantage lies in the high level of trust it enjoys among customers. This is reflected in the popularity of its banking services. While Taiwan has a population of around 23.5 million people, about 27.5 million postal savings accounts have been opened, with total deposits amounting to NT\$5.8 trillion (US\$178.2 billion), outperforming all other financial institutions in the country.

In recent years, Chunghwa Post has also sought to boost interest in stamp collecting by introducing a variety of new philatelic products. It now releases 20 to 22 stamp sets annually in addition to stamp booklets, folios, pictorials, as well as souvenir sheets, which are small groups of

postage stamps attached to the sheet on which they were printed. The firm has also produced goods like cups, plates, stickers, tape and toy figurines to accompany these products.

Stamps issued by Chunghwa Post, which have featured depictions of everything from Taiwan’s flora and fauna to cartoon characters like Hello Kitty, have become highly prized by philatelists. To encourage stamp collecting, especially among young people, the postal company has organized a range of activities including competitions, exhibitions, summer camps and teacher training programs, as well as sales promotions and publicity campaigns. It also operates a museum in Taipei that offers visitors a wealth of information about the history and evolution of postal services in Taiwan.



Last year, Chunghwa Post collaborated with the Chinese Taipei Philatelic Federation (CTPF) to organize the 30th Asian International Stamp Exhibition from April 24-28 at the Taipei World Trade Center (TWTC). Held under the patronage of the Singapore-based Federation of Inter-Asian Philately, the event attracted about 230,000 philately enthusiasts from 24 countries and territories.

Chunghwa Post, which is celebrating the 120th anniversary of its establishment this year, will cooperate with the CTPF again to host the 2016 World Stamp Champion-



ship Exhibition from Oct. 21-26 at the TWTC. Representatives from 72 countries and territories are expected to participate in the event, which will feature about 2,000 frames for competitive and non-competitive displays. “Holding an international exhibition can promote stamp



collecting and facilitate exchanges between members of Taiwan’s philatelic community and their foreign counterparts,” says Sophia Chien, director of Chungwa Post’s Philately Department. “It can also boost the nation’s visibility on the world stage.”

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## Orchid blooms at Taiwan’s annual show



**The annual Taiwan International Orchid Show is set to take place March 12 to 21 in the southern city of Tainan. In addition to locally grown orchids, the event this year will feature several rare species of monkey orchids from Ecuador and Peru.**

The event attracts tens of thousands of orchid growers and industry experts from all over the world every year, which also demonstrates the success of Taiwan’s orchid industry. Taiwan, an expert in breeding the indigenous *Phalaenopsis*, or moth orchid, export its orchids to more than 30 countries in North American, Europe and South Africa. The latest Council of Agriculture statistics showed that Taiwan exported US\$144 million worth of orchids in 2015.

The nation also won its bid to host the 23rd World Orchid Conference in 2020. The triennial event, according to the global orchid community, is the equivalent of the Olympic Games of the orchid industry. The fact that Taiwan has been awarded to

host the prestigious event is testimony to international recognition of local orchid growers’ strength and competitiveness. Taiwan’s orchid sector also received a major boost recently.

The US Department of Agriculture announced Feb. 4 that it has cleared the way for exports of locally cultivated *Oncidium* orchids potted in growing media. After the United States began accepting exports of Taiwan produced *Phalaenopsis* orchids in growing medium in 2004, the ROC government started seeking the same treatment for *Oncidium* orchids.

The regulatory change, which takes effect March 7, is expected to benefit orchid growers in Taiwan and the United States. According to the USDA Animal and Plant



Health Inspection Service, Taiwan products were greenlighted because the country is a signatory to the World Trade Organization's Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures, and respects relevant measures the United States imposes on such exports.



Taipei Representative Office in Hungary  
Photos: facebook.com/2016tios

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## A Grand Designer with No Grand Design: Andre Kao's Fashion Career

Against a background of lazy, hazy music and the soft, warm vocals of the Cranberries, models wearing one unusual outfit after another strut across the stage, while those in the audience suddenly are transported into a psychedelic world that is hard to describe in words. This was the scene in 2009, when then student Andre Kao was displaying his designs at the Graduate Catwalk Show of Shih Chien University's Department of Fashion Design.



Text: Taiwan Panorama, Polly Peng, Photos: Chuang Kung-ju

Andre's work on display that day integrated installation art and Goth style with, most importantly of all, aesthetic elements from Taiwan's indigenous peoples. The powerful visual impact of this combination attracted a great deal of attention from the audience at the venue, and eventually earned Andre the top prize for the catwalk show. "After the show was over, a number of professional clothing designers and buyers rushed over to talk to me, hoping we could work together." From that moment, Andre was certain about the future path he should follow.

### MARQUEE ARTIST

"In fact, I never ever imagined that I would one day work as a professional in the world of fashion," says Andre, a Paiwan aborigine from Taitung County, "I just did what I did, but there was no 'grand design' behind it. Everything that has happened has just unfolded."

Coming from a very poor family, as the eldest son Andre was under an obligation to contribute to the family income. In his first year in junior high school, he took a leave of absence and headed off to Taipei to find a job. He ended up working



as a painter for old-fashioned movie billboards. “As a result, the person who I was then had very little book learning, but I had seen a lot of movies.”

However, the business of producing painted movie billboards had long been in decline, so he decided to get more professional training of a practical nature, but first he had to go through a period of studying hard on his own to acquire an equivalency certification for a junior high school diploma. Then he tested into Fu-Hsin Trade and Arts School, and graduated from its department of drawing and painting with the highest grades in his class.

## **FOUNDING HIS OWN BRAND**

In 2009, after receiving a Taiwan Fashion Design Award from the Taiwan Textile Federation (TTF), Andre decided to create his own eponymous brand name. When the TTF later established the Fashion Institute of Taipei (FIT) and held its first competition for clothing design, Andre was one of the first cohort of five award winners.

“Those of us who became resident designers at FIT got access to all its facilities, equipment, and technical support, including the three sample making centers that TTF set up. We even each got our own workshop.” In addition, TTF set up a collective kiosk at Eslite Bookstore Parklane in Taichung, where the five designers could display and sell their work.

This was the first time that the ANDRE brand actually came face to face with consumers, and all his clothing in the Eslite Parklane sold out in one day. People in the fashion business used terms like “overnight hit” and “home run on his first

swing” to describe what had happened, but Andre himself says, “It was like taking a tranquilizer. It turned out that after all there really were consumers who liked my clothing, and I reckoned I could put my mind at ease and keep plowing ahead.”

In 2014, building on seven aboriginal myths and legends, Andre came up with a series of printed textiles with which to design extremely original clothing. He also put this together with crystal jewelry of the Weng Collection, the brand founded by third-generation Formosa Plastics heir Fanny Tsai. The result won a silver medal for cutting-edge creativity at the Taipei IN Style exhibition.

## **BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES**

To get more business opportunities, Andre would produce very few samples, which he then took, at his own expense, to international fashion exhibitions and shows, planning to mass-produce the designs only after receiving orders. All around the world – Paris, New York, Hong Kong, Beijing, Shanghai – at fashion weeks and trade shows of the latest trends, Andre would be there. Through these exhibitions he received orders from a number of countries in Europe and the Middle East. Andre points out that when it comes to fashion, design and trends, people in Taiwan are always emphasizing that they want to pursue “internationalization.”

Whether he succeeds or not, there is no doubt that his indigenous heritage will remain at the heart of his creative work. “Taiwan’s indigenous peoples have extraordinarily rich and colorful traditional elements, which is the core competitive feature for the development of my own brand.”

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