



Photo by Theerasak Saksritauwee



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CABINET REVEALS THREE-YEAR PLAN TO TACKLE AIR POLLUTION

The Executive Yuan unveiled a three-year NT\$36.5 billion (US\$1.2 billion) air pollution control and prevention strategy April 13, pledging to reduce the density of fine particulate matter (PM 2.5) in Taiwan from 22 to 18 micrograms per cubic meter by 2019.

During a news conference in Taipei, Premier Lin Chuan said in addition to the 18.2 percent reduction in the pollutants, the initiative aims to also reduce the number of air quality red alert days by 47 percent.

In addition to PM 2.5 originating from outside Taiwan, locally produced aerosols (from vehicular sources) and emissions by the industrial sector are sources of air pollution.

Climate and seasonal changes also play a significant role in the country's air quality, especially during the period from October to March when northeastern winds bring in smog from neighboring areas. The Cabinet's ini-

tiative seeks to address these problems through 14 specific measures. These include phasing out one million two-stroke motorcycles and 80,000 Euro I and II heavy duty diesel trucks with financial incentives, and subsidizing the installation of smoke filters on 38,000 Euro III diesel trucks. Euro I, II and III refer to the different European emission standards for large goods vehicles.

Other measures include implementing stricter environmental protection rules, subsidizing purchases of gas-powered water boilers and upgrading the efficiency of the country's fossil fuel-burning power generation facilities.

Source: Taiwan Today



Reporters Without Borders selects Taipei for first Asian bureau

The Republic of China (Taiwan) government welcomed the decision by Reporters Without Borders to open its first Asian bureau in Taipei, Cabinet spokesperson Hsu Kuo-yung said April 7 in response to the organization's announcement the previous day.

According to Hsu, the move was particularly significant in that it coincided with Taiwan's first Freedom of Speech Day. The Cabinet said the decision also highlights Taiwan's status as a true democracy where citizens enjoy the full measure of human rights and free speech.

Domestic nongovernmental organizations (NGO) are thriving and Taiwan welcomes all international NGOs to set up bases in the country, Hsu said. The gov-

ernment is confident that the international watchdog will operate successfully in Taiwan's democratic environment and will help bolster the nation's contributions to promoting press freedoms across the region, he added.

"The choice of Taiwan was made not only with regards to its central geographic location and ease of operating logistics, but also considering its status of

being the freest place in Asia in our annual Press Freedom Index ranking," said Christophe Deloire, secretary-general of the Paris-headquartered group, also known by its French name Reporters sans Frontières (RSF).



According to RSF, the Taipei bureau will serve as a strategic platform for exercising influence and raising awareness of media rights in countries and territories across East Asia, includ-

ing Taiwan, Hong Kong, Japan, North Korea, Mongolia, South Korea and mainland China.

Founded in 1985, RSF has compiled the Press Freedom Index annually since 2002 by drawing on the opinions of partner organizations, its 150 correspondents in 130 countries, as well as journalists, researchers, jurists and human rights activists around the globe.



Taiwan to join NASA hackathon for first time

Taiwan will participate this year for the first time in the NASA International Space Apps Challenge, one of the largest hackathons in the world, the American Institute in Taiwan (AIT) said April 6.

The programming marathon style hackathon will utilize NASA's open data, inviting participants in 110 cities around the world to provide hardware, software and innovative solutions to global challenges such as water resource management and natural disaster response, the AIT said.

"With unique vantage points in air and in space, NASA collects high-quality data covering all parts of the planet, which tells us more about the world we live in," the AIT said in a news release. The theme for the 2017 hackathon is the Earth, according to the AIT, which represents U.S. interests in Taiwan in the absence of bilateral diplomatic relations.

"It is especially meaningful to hold this event in April, when we celebrate Earth

Day," AIT's public diplomacy section chief Joseph Bookbinder was quoted as saying in the news release.

Registration is now open for the Taiwan part of the hackathon, which will be held April 29-30 at National Taiwan University, the AIT said.

The Taiwan part of the challenge will be hosted jointly by the AIT,

Taiwan's Ministry of Science and Technology, National Taiwan University and Taipei City's Department of Information Technology, the AIT said.

The international hackathon is held over the course of 48 hours in cities around the world, inviting the participation of students, scientists, designers, makers, technologists and anyone enthusiastic about addressing Earth's challenges, it said.



Source: Focus Taiwan, Photo: 2017spacappschallenge.org/locations/taipei/

Indigenous Thao tribe confirms new priestess during spring festival

Members of the indigenous Thao, one of Taiwan's 16 officially recognized tribes, initiated a new priestess April 1 at Sun Moon Lake in central Taiwan's Nantou County during the ongoing Pudaqu spring festival, concluding a search nearly 10 years in the making.

The Thao people, who primarily reside around Sun Moon Lake, have a population of roughly 770. They hold the annual Pudaqu festival, which this year takes place

from March 31 to April 12, to celebrate the sowing of crops in spring.

The festival features important ceremonies such as Lhalhaushin, which involves a



large bamboo swing. Members of the tribe, in order of age, take turns on the swing, which symbolizes fertile crops swaying in the wind. The ceremony is closed to the public and held in hopes of bountiful crops. According to the Thao Culture and Development Association, the tribe spent nearly a decade search-



ing for a candidate who could one day become a Shinshii priestess, whose purpose is to bridge the living and spirit worlds. The Thao people believe that the priestess is able to communicate with their ancestors during sacred rites, the association said. The Shinshii initiation ceremony, a complex ritual of ancient origin, is performed on Lalu, a consecrated island in the middle of Sun Moon Lake.

In an effort to ensure the occasion's success, the Nantou County Government closed down all four of the lake's piers, restricting water traffic to help ensure calm waters. "Traditional Thao culture has been severely impacted by the development of

Sun Moon Lake's tourism industry over the years," said Chang Sai-ching, chief of the local government's Cultural Affairs Bureau. "It is a top priority for the government to find ways to preserve their culture in the face of modernization."

On the national level, the Thao were given a boost when the Bureau of Cultural Heritage under the Ministry of Culture designated the tribe's Lus'an festival as a national intangible cultural heritage in 2015. The festival marks a new year for the Thao tribe, which gathers to celebrate the harvest.

According to the Cabinet-level Council of Indigenous Peoples (CIP), indigenous Malayo-Polynesian peoples have lived in Taiwan for millennia, with archaeological evidence confirming their presence dating back 12,000 to 15,000 years. CIP statistics reveal that the collective population of all indigenous groups in Taiwan stood at around 550,000, or 2.4 percent of Taiwan's total population, at the end of 2016.

Source: *Taiwan Today*, Photo: Courtesy of Thao Culture and Development Association

More women than men waive their right to inheritance in Taiwan

The number of women in Taiwan who chose to waive their right to inheritance last year surpassed that of their male counterparts by 7,000 people, according to Ministry of Finance figures released on April 9.

According to the ministry statistics, 30,000 women in 2015 waived their right to inheritance, while only 23,000 men did so. Meanwhile, among the 210,000 individuals who paid their estate and gift tax during this period, female heirs only accounted for about

Source: *Focus Taiwan*



40 percent of the total, or 82,000 people.

According to tradition, only males can pass down property and the family name, the Finance Ministry said, pointing out that although Taiwanese males and females are equal before the law and have an equal right to inheritance, females are often pressured to waive their right to inheritance based on this tradition. Although there are various reasons other

than tradition as to why women would choose to abandon their right to inheritance, gender inequality is still prevalent in Taiwan, said Sherry Chang, head of communications and global transfer pricing services country leader at KPMG in Taiwan. Although much progress has been made to protect and promote women's rights in recent years, there is still room for improvement, it said.

Taiwan at the Explorers' Day in Budapest

The Taipei Representative Office in Hungary is pleased to announce that Taiwan will again be featured at the annual Explorers' Day (Felfedezők Napja) event in Budapest April 29, 2017 at Millenáris (building D).



Visitors are welcome to the Taiwan booth to try their hand at writing traditional Chinese characters and winning souvenirs from Taiwan. The office is also joining the event's 7Próba so visitors can take a short

quiz at the Taiwan booth and have a chance to win two DVDs about Taiwan's mega-structures and medical achievements. The films are made in cooperation with the National Geographic Channel and Discovery Channel, respectively. This year, the Taipei Representative Office has the pleasure to cooperate with the Hungarian Natural Science Museum to introduce Taiwan's butterflies. Please check out the collection at the museum's booth and find out more about these beautiful creatures. Taiwan's participation in the event offers a great opportunity for members of the Hungarian public to get to know the dynamic democracy, and to have some fun while doing it.

Ambassador Tao Wen-lung will be delivering remarks at 12:35 on the main stage (nagyszínpad). He welcomes everyone to the Taiwan booth and see for themselves what this little gem in Asia has to offer.

Source and photo: Taipei Representative Office in Hungary



Animal protection group praises Taiwan's dog, cat meat ban

The global animal protection organization Humane Society International (HSI) on April 12 applauded Taiwan for introducing a categorical ban on the slaughter of dogs and cats for human consumption.

A day earlier, the Legislative Yuan passed an amendment to the Animal Protection Act that prohibits the sale and consumption of dog and cat meat, as well as any type of food products that contain the meat or parts of such animals.

Violation of the law is punishable by a fine of NT\$50,000 (US\$1,646) to NT\$250,000, and the names and photos of the offenders may be published, according to the amendment. In a statement, HSI described the move as "a monumental step in ending Taiwan's dog meat trade."

In fact, however, Taiwan's 1998 Animal Protection Act outlawed the killing or hurting of dogs, and there is little or no commercial trade in dog meat.

"This legislation is going to send a message to China, Nagaland State in India, Indonesia and other Asian countries where

dog meat consumption is still legal, that ending the brutal dog meat trade is a pos-



Source: Focus Taiwan, Photo: KksZ

itive trend across Asia and a step in the public's long-term interest," said Kelly O'Meara, director of companion animals and engagement for HSI.

Local documentary among Cannes' Cine- fondation Selection

"Toward the Sun", a 28-minute documentary by a Taiwanese college student, has been one of the 16 films selected by the Cinefondation, a foundation under the aegis of the Film Festival, on April 12.

The 16 films (14 works of fiction and 2 animations) are selected from among 2,600 works submitted by film schools from all over the world this year, according to the Cinefondation, created to inspire and support the next generation of international filmmakers.

The Cinefondation will award the best three of the 16 on May 26.

Wang Yi-ling, the director, screenplay and editor of the film and a senior majoring in motion picture at National Taiwan University of Arts, said though she was happy to learn of the news, her "brain goes blank."



The film depicts a man, whose house had been foreclosed by the government, and a woman, with an air ticket and a lightweight luggage, moving northbound on a truck in Taiwan. Wang told the Central News Agency that the film is partly based on her own experience and was shot on the road from Luye Township, Taitung



County, through Hualien City, Yilan County's Su-ao Township, to Taipei.

Wang said she hadn't watched a movie until high school, since she lived in the remote Shuangxi Township in Taipei County (now New Taipei City). "Toward the Sun" won a special jury award in the 2016 Women Make Waves Film Festival, Taiwan.

Source: Focus Taiwan, Photo: ummfj.pixnet.net

iTaiwan free wi-fi services to be upgraded

A plan to upgrade the iTaiwan free Wi-Fi service in public spaces and on transportation networks such as Taiwan High Speed Rail (THSR) before the Summer Universiade and World Congress on Information Technology commence August 19-30 and September 10-13 in Taipei, respectively, was detailed by Premier Lin Chuan March 30 in Taipei.

The project is the first seeking to boost broadband internet access and bridge the urban-rural divide in Taiwan under the NT\$46 billion (US\$1.49 billion) digital component of the government's new Forward-looking Infrastructure



Program. It involves the installation in 12 THSR tunnels of leaky feeder communication systems, which will emit signals to Wi-Fi routers in each of THSR's 34 trains.

According to the Board of Science and Technology under the Executive Yuan, the project will give passengers wireless access to the internet using an iTaiwan account.

Lin said since its launch in 2007, THSR

has become an irreplaceable mode of transportation for locals and foreign tourists. It is heading towards a new milestone through providing passengers with free

Wi-Fi, he added.

By providing free Wi-Fi access in public

places and on transportation networks, Lin said, iTaiwan is further upgrading the nation's reputation as a high-tech hub at home and abroad.

THSR is the nation's flagship rail transportation system. Ridership on the 350-kilometer north-south line situated in western Taiwan increased from 30.58 million in 2008 to more than 50 million in 2015 and

Source: Taiwan Today, Photo: Courtesy of Taiwan Tourism Bureau



again in 2016. In December last year, it carried its 400 millionth passenger.

Launched in December 2013 by the Tourism Bureau under the Ministry of Transportation and Communications, the iTaiwan free Wi-Fi service boasts 10,136 hotspots nationwide and over 4.13 million registered accounts. To date, the

service has recorded more than 210 million logins, of which 730,000 were attributed to foreign tourists.

The digital component of the FIP comprises five key areas: cultural and creative new media, infrastructure as security, innovative workforce, internet access as a human right and one-click service.

Freeway restrictions for safe migration of purple crow butterflies

Massive flocks of purple crow butterflies swarmed from Kaohsiung April 14 heading north during their regular migration and prompting freeway authorities to close the outer lane of a section of freeway No. 3 in southern Taiwan to protect the creatures from vehicles traveling at high speeds.

The butterfly migration began in bright sunlight after several days of rain, with more than 900 purple crows per minute observed flying from Kaohsiung's Maolin District, home to the Maolin National Scenic Park, toward the north, according to the Taiwan Purple Crow Butterfly Ecological Preservation Association.

Because Linnei Township in Yunlin County is one of the key rest stops for the migrating butterflies, the Taiwan Area National Freeway Bureau closed the northbound outer lane of the freeway No. 3 Lin-



Euploea mulciber barsine

nei-Tsukou section at around 11:30 a.m. to protect the insects as they crossed the road.

The emergency measure, however, was not comprehensive enough to protect the butterflies, despite the erection of protective netting along the sides of the freeway. Many of the insects were killed by cars throughout the day, the association said. The association added that the scale of April

14's migration of purple crows, one of the most common butterfly species in Taiwan, was the largest in nearly five years.

Source: Focus Taiwan, Photo: Courtesy of Nantou Forest District Office

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