

Taiwan Wins Big at WorldSkills Competition

Skills are things we can learn and improve. They help us do well in different jobs. For example, people who like being creative and working with tools might learn to make jewelry or build cabinets. Good skills can lead to great careers and help people compete worldwide.

Taiwan is famous for teaching strong skills. Its vocational schools and technical universities help students develop world-class abilities. Last month, 58 Taiwanese students competed in the WorldSkills Competition in France. This is the biggest skills competition in the world, held every two years. Over 1,400 young people from 70 countries and regions took part.

Taiwan did very well, finishing in fourth place with 43 awards: two gold medals, three silver medals, 10 bronze medals, and 28 medallions for excellence. These medallions are for competitors who score very high but don't win a top-three medal.

One gold medal went to Tsai Yun-rong for cabinetmaking. Tsai has loved working with wood since he was in kindergarten and started competing in junior high. He also won the WorldSkills Best of Nation medal for having the highest score on Taiwan's team. The second gold medal was won by Chen Sz-yuan in refrigeration and air conditioning. Chen began learning about air conditioning at 15 and is known for being careful and hardworking.

Taiwan is very proud of its team. To join WorldSkills, the students first had to win local and national competitions. They showed they have world-class talent. Next year, Taiwan will host the WorldSkills Asia Competition, and many students are already preparing to join.

The Clever Fox and the Thirsty Crow

One hot summer afternoon, a crow was flying through the forest. She was very thirsty and tired. She had searched for water all day but couldn't find any. Just when she was about to give up, she saw a tall pitcher near a big tree. Feeling hopeful, she flew down to look inside. At the bottom of the pitcher, she saw some water. But when she tried to drink, her beak couldn't reach the water—it was too low.

The crow didn't know what to do. She thought hard but couldn't find a way to get the water. Just then, a fox walked by and saw her. The fox laughed because he liked teasing others. "Oh, poor crow! You're too small and weak to drink that water," he said. "Why don't you give up and let someone stronger take it?"

The crow didn't listen to the fox. She stayed calm and looked around. Soon, she noticed some small stones on the ground. She had an idea. She picked up a stone in her beak and dropped it into the pitcher. Then she picked up another and did the same.

The fox watched, laughing at first. But as the water slowly rose higher and higher, he stopped laughing. "You'll never make it work," he said, trying to stop her. But the crow kept going, one stone at a time.

Finally, the water reached the top of the pitcher. The crow drank deeply and felt much better. She looked at the fox, who now looked surprised and thirsty.

"Sometimes, being smart and patient is better than being strong," the crow said. Then she flew away, leaving the fox to think about what he had seen.

The fox learned an important lesson: never underestimate someone who is determined.

Japanese Mayor Helps Busy Parents

Parents have many things to do. They need to take care of their children every day, bring them to daycare, school, and activities, and also work to support their families. It's not surprising that many people are deciding to have fewer children. Life is stressful for parents, and in many countries, populations are getting smaller because of this.

One Japanese mayor is trying to help. Yoshiharu Izaki, the mayor of Nagareyama, a city near Tokyo, has created a system to make life easier for working parents. In the morning, parents can drop their children off at the train station on their way to work in Tokyo. Then, a bus takes the children to daycare. This saves parents time and makes their daily routine less stressful. In the evening, parents can pick up their children at the train station. It's a simple and helpful system for busy families.

Mayor Yoshiharu has also worked on other projects. Nagareyama now has more parks and green spaces. The city wants to be known as "the forest city closest to Tokyo." These parks are close to people's homes, so families can enjoy nature without traveling far.

Is the plan working? It seems to be. Nagareyama's birth rate is 1.5 children per woman. This is higher than Japan's national average, though it's still lower than the 2.1 needed for population growth. Mayor Yoshiharu hopes to keep improving the system and share his ideas with other cities. By helping parents save time, he hopes they will feel more comfortable having children and spending more time with their families.

More Dogs and Cats as Pets in Taiwan

Having a pet is a wonderful way to feel less lonely, and many people are choosing to have pets. A survey by the Ministry of Agriculture found that Taiwan had almost 1.5 million dogs and over 1.3 million cats last year. This means there were 19% more dogs and 50% more cats than in 2021. Other pets also increased by 3.3%.

This is not only happening in Taiwan. Around the world, pet numbers are growing. In the US, EU, and China, there are more than half a billion dogs and cats. During the COVID-19 pandemic, many people got pets to feel better during lockdowns. For example, in Australia, people got 1.2 million more dogs after the pandemic. Some people also prefer pets instead of children because raising children can be harder.

As more people get pets, the pet industry is growing fast. The Taiwan Institute of Economic Research says pet owners spend about NT\$28,000 per pet each year. In Taiwan, the “pet economy” is now worth over NT\$50 billion a year. This includes spending on vets, grooming, food, toys, and other items. There are also almost as many pet events as events for parents and children. In the future, Taiwan may have more pets than children!

But owning more pets also creates problems. In Taiwan, dogs must have a microchip and be registered by law. However, only Taipei requires cat registration. Now, the Ministry of Agriculture is thinking about making cat registration a rule across the country.

So, don't be surprised if, in the future, you see more dogs than kids at the park!