

Immigrants welcome in Taiwan: minister

Written by Taipei Times

Monday, 28 October 2019 04:54 -



Minister of the Interior Hsu Kuo-yung, second row, center, attends the "New Immigrant Forum" at the National Immigration Agency in Taipei yesterday.

Photo: CNA

The government will continue to empower immigrants and their children through financial assistance and relaxation of immigration policies, Minister of the Interior Hsu Kuo-yung (胡國勇) said yesterday.

More than 300 immigrants, mostly from Southeast Asian countries and married to Taiwanese, attended the "New Immigrant Forum" at the National Immigration Agency (NIA). The event's aim was to disseminate information about government empowerment programs for immigrants.

Hsu said there are an estimated 550,000 immigrants living in Taiwan.

New residents have enriched Taiwan's national strength with their contributions to society, Hsu said.

He also encouraged immigrants to speak in their native languages with their children to enhance their competitiveness in the future.

He cited the story of Cheng Tsui-hsuan (程瑞娟), a 19-year-old Vietnamese woman who came to Taiwan two years ago when her mother married a Taiwanese, as an example of how, with hard work and dedication, success is attainable for every immigrant.

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Cheng, whose Vietnamese surname was Nguyen, was adopted by her Taiwanese stepfather and had to work as a vendor in a market to support the family after her parents fell ill. She has also been responsible for the care of her younger sister.

Despite these challenges, including the language barrier, she passed the accounting competency test for senior high-school students last year and was ranked first in Yilan County.

Cheng expressed hopes of becoming a human rights lawyer to look after immigrants and their children in Taiwan.

Residency restrictions for immigrants who marry Taiwanese have been relaxed, giving them more leeway to stay in Taiwan, even if they get divorced or if their spouse passes away, the NIA said.

Other empowerment measures include a NT\$20,000 to NT\$70,000 subsidy for second or third-generation immigrants to visit their grandparents abroad.

Another project, called “New Residents and Children Dream Plan,” provides up to NT\$80,000 to help immigrants and their children fulfill their dreams, as well as scholarships for disadvantaged students, outstanding students and those with special talents.

Source: [Taipei Times - 2019/10/28](#)