

Martin in China on trade trip

MINISTER Micheál Martin is in China this week as part of the largest-ever Irish trade mission to China and Hong Kong. Minister Martin, who has responsibility for Enterprise and Trade, travelled to China today, along with the Taoiseach Bertie Ahern, and three other ministers. The group will remain in China for the week, returning on Saturday. The trade mission has been organised by Enterprise Ireland, which has offices in Beijing, Shanghai, Hong Kong and Guangzhou.

Representatives of more than 120 bodies, including businesses and education institutions, are travelling on the trip.

Minister Martin said the Chinese economy is generating exciting opportunities for Irish companies. "This trade mission will help Irish companies develop their business in China and investigate all elements of the market, including local competition and support infrastructure," Minister Martin said. The other ministers travelling on the trade mission are Agriculture Minister Mary Coughlan, Education Minister Mary Hanafin and Communications, Marine and Natural Resources Minister Noel Dempsey. The CEO of Enterprise Ireland, Frank Ryan, is also on the trip.

Rave reviews as schoolkids go centre stage for panto fun

Amy, Shane and Katie Collins in the 'Puss in Boots'.

Picture: News Digital



Fermoy kids are the cat's meow in Puss in Boots show

MORE than 100 children from the Fermoy area have taken part in the opening weekend of the annual pantomime at the local community youth centre.

The children aged between seven and 16, star alongside Mitchelstown teacher Micheal Dennehy, who plays the dame, in the production of *Puss in Boots*, which opened on Friday to rave reviews. A spokesman for the centre said preparations for the show have been ongoing for the past three months. "Auditions for the show, which is being directed by Margo Carlisle and produced by Clare Barry, were held last October

with literally hundreds of children turning up," he said.

"The children have been frantically learning their lines and preparing costumes since then," he added.

Performances took place on Friday and Saturday night at 8pm and Saturday and Sunday afternoon at 3pm.

There will be no shows during the week and the final performances will be held next weekend.

Tickets for the evening shows cost €8 for adults and €5 for children. All tickets for the matinee performances cost €5 and are available from the community centre on (025) 32042.



Danielle Cody, Rachel Lomasney, Stacey Stanford, Shauna McGrath and Ciara Nolan in 'Puss in Boots'.

Picture: News Digital



Aisling McGrath, Aoife Collins and Sarah Noonan in the Fermoy Community Youth Centre Production of 'Puss in Boots'.

Picture: News Digital

ROBERT O'SHEA confronts the horrors of the washing machine

WHILE scouring the sales for my spring wardrobe recently, I found myself idling at the Patrick's Street entrance to Roches Stores.

A young man and I were trying to exit the store but before going out he held it open wide for a mother and child to enter. Half of Cork took advantage of his chivalry and I left the young man grinning there inanely while I made my departure.

There are five doors at Patrick's Street main entrance to Roches. When I returned to the store later in the day a helpful assistant told me that the idea behind this was that the middle three doors were the entrances while the two doors on either side should be used as exits. But why three entrances and two exits?

"Well, it doesn't make much difference really because people just use whichever door they want," she answered, somewhat resigned to the anarchy of the whole situation.

It struck your ace reporter as odd, so for one week I stood with our paper vendor outside the doors and observed the flow of people. The idea behind the five doors was fully justified, I learned, after discovering that almost twice as many people enter the store than leave it.

"That's right buddy," intoned our *Echo* seller, "but what you are forgetting is that they can sneak out the Merchant's Quay and Maylor Street exits."

All this investigating meant my spring wardrobe search was put on hiatus. That quest had been one of necessity rather than any newly found interest in haute couture; since moving to the city four months ago I have been struggling particularly in one area: laundry.

On a recent trip home my mother said that she had noticed my visits always coincided with the return home of a big bag of washing. I knew what she was implying and as I hadn't travelled home to be insulted I stormed right out the door and walked to the bus stop. I then stormed back to pick up my bag of washing before storming

O'Shea on Monday

robert.oshea@eecho.ie

In a fast spin with the washing

back again to the bus stop.

With my plan of purchasing new clothes foiled by the door situation, I found myself forced to face up to the prospect of cleaning clothes myself. A fortnight later, I pass on my findings.

It is generally accepted that a single man's used clothes should be gathered in a pile at the bottom of his wardrobe. There they must be left to ferment until they smell slightly musty like something that can only be compared to one of your unmarried uncle's bedrooms.

If you need something to wear in a hurry, but

there is nothing clean, you should go to the heap and:

- 1) Hold a chosen garment at arm's length.
- 2) Spray it liberally with any high-street deodorant.

Some undergarments at the very bottom of the heap will have become clean after a certain period of time. No scientific explanation has been found for this yet.

On occasions though, you will have to use a washing machine. If purchasing detergent, try to make sure it is non-biological and dermatologically tested. I'm not sure why, but when they

tell you this on the ads they say it in a way that makes you feel you should be impressed. Next step is to start washing.

There will be buttons like RINSE HOLD and SLOW SPIN and a knob with lots of indecipherable symbols. Try to select the symbols that correspond to the tags on your clothes. I normally turn it to the circular wavy symbol because it suggests the motion of spinning; when I feel more adventurous I use the symbol that seems to portray a transparent bucket of water. And you can't go far wrong with a RINSE HOLD.

Don't follow the tags religiously, they are only a guide. Some articles of clothing may shrink, but if you do accidentally shrink some of your clothes, don't throw them away; instead, give them to nieces and nephews for their birthdays.

I guess you all know by now that socks get directionally confused when it comes to laundry. The washing machine is their Bermuda triangle. That's right, it is the exact same as our Roches front door problem, with one coming out for every two going in. Anyway, I advise that socks be washed one at a time.

When you open the washer drawer, you are faced with a stark choice. Which one of the three compartments does the powder go into? If you cannot find traces of powder from previous washes in one of them, the middle compartment is as good a choice as any. One of the other compartments is for fabric softener, which we will not be using because its benefits erode once we get to the drying process. The other compartment, like many things in life, is a mystery. Some academics suggest it is a sock escape tunnel.

All that is left to do now is turn the machine on. You can tell the machine is working properly if it is making a noise.

Leave the machine to whirl for two hours. Your clothes should now be washed or, at the very least, wet.

Radiators are the single man's tried and trusted stalwart for drying clothes. When the clothes are stiff enough you must iron them or face the prospect of being nicknamed 'Creasy'. But ironing is far too rich a subject and will have to be dealt with in a separate article.