

## NEWS

### Thai Labour Ministry Officials Share Experiences of Study Trip to Germany

To share the knowledge they learned during a study trip to Germany with fellow civil servants, senior officials at the Thai Labour and Foreign Ministries held a seminar on 3 June 2009 in cooperation with the Friedrich Naumann Foundation.

Thai Labour Minister Yuph Nana presided over the opening of the seminar and gave a speech to welcome participants. Dr. Weerachai Chayasriwong, Deputy Permanent Secretary of the Labour Ministry, moderated the seminar held at the ministry in Bangkok.



Representing the FNF was Dr. Rainer Adam, head of the Foundation's Southeast and East Asia regional office. He gave an overview of the Study Tour Project, which offered Thai officials an opportunity to study how liberal policies are being applied in a liberal democratic society like Germany to raise industrial standards, improve workers' skills and minimize chances of mass layoffs.

For example, there is industrial practice in which during economic downturn, manufacturing companies may reduce work hours and pay to workers accordingly instead of dismissing them permanently. At the same time, the German government agrees to pay workers up to 60% of the wages they should otherwise have received in the absence of mandatory furlough. In

addition, the government also provides financial aid to workers who spend this "free time" to acquire additional skills related to their line of work.

Speaking at the seminar were some of the Thai officials who took the trip arranged by the FNF in March 2009. They included: Mr. Pairat Lumyong from the Foreign Ministry, Dr. Weerachai Thavornthon, advisor to the Minister of Labour, and three deputy directors-general from the Labour Ministry.



Mr. Theodor Proffe of the German Embassy's Department of Political and Protocol Affairs represented the German ambassador in a ceremony of conferring certificates to the delegates who undertook the study trip.

Dr. Weerachai talked about his observation of German labour markets and policies. Mr. Chavarit Tuntisuk of the Labour Protection and Welfare Department, spoke of the German welfare system and labour protection. Dr. Rainer Adam and Mrs. Girawadee Khao-orn talked about the German educational system called "Dual System" that produces professional semi-skilled and skilled workers to serve specific needs of the market. Under this dual learning system, vocational school students have to take classes at school and undertake compulsory practical training at business establishments where they can actually practice what they have learned in theory.

### Self-Reliant Economics Training for Teachers in Rural Cambodia

The Friedrich Naumann Foundation in cooperation with the Cambodian Centre for Study and Development in Agriculture (CEDAC) conducted a European Union-funded training programme on self-reliant economics for Cambodian teachers.

This one-day training is part of a larger project called "Poverty Reduction through Self-Reliant Development" aimed at raising the standard of living of Cambodians using self-help approaches.



The FNF and its partners had organised similar trainings over the past years, with thousands of locals benefitting from new knowledge and shared learning. The first training of 2009 in Prey Veng province took place at the CEDAC office in Baphnom district on 23 May. It was the 13th out of a total of 40 training workshops scheduled to take place in nine provinces and the Phnom Penh municipality in 2009 under the poverty-reduction project.

At this workshop, two former graduates of a poverty-reduction programme—one farmer and one teacher---were invited to speak and share their success stories with participants. About 40 people joined this training workshop. They included school principals, vice principals, primary- and secondary-school teachers from Baphnom

district were invited to join this forum.

Participants paid their own transportation cost, mostly by driving motorbikes on bumpy rural roads. The longest distance is 15 kilometres. The meeting room was provided by CEDAC free of charge as a contribution.

The workshop started with participants introducing themselves to everyone. Two facilitators--Mr. Khim Sophanna of FNF and Mr. Hour Sreng of CEDAC—presented an overview of the training programme and introduced guest speakers.

The first speaker was a successful farmer. Mr. Lay Khoeun talked about personal habits that help him succeed and agricultural methods and practice that brought him more income. Some years ago, the proactive farmer joined FNF-CEDAC rural development projects and attended training workshops on multi-purpose farming, savings groups and social marketing.

Before joining these projects, he and his family lived in poor conditions. But now, he is better off with higher income from his farms. He has seven children and can send all of them to school. Three of his children already completed their bachelor's degrees and are working full-time as teachers. In rural Cambodia, few farmer families can afford to send all their children to school.

The second speaker was Mr. Va Sarun, principal of the Baphnom high school. He talked about his experiences of implementing a successful community savings project. Initially, 56 out of a total of 104 teachers at this school joined the savings group which they established in 2006. Each share equals 10,000 riels (USD 2.5) and his team has 104 shares. Together, they can save more than one million riels a month. Currently, a total of 87 teachers joined the savings group with 166 shares.

Since its establishment, the savings programme has collected 60 million riels (about USD 15,000). Some of the money is borrowed by members to support useful projects such as chicken raising, pig raising, and starting small businesses.

Mr. Va Sarun encouraged more teachers to join this savings scheme and planned to offer loan services to non-members in the near future. He wished to see a similar savings group operating in every school in Cambodia so that teachers have a proper means for relying on each other. One day it might well become a "teacher bank," he said.



Now, there are ten teacher savings associations with 405 members (out of about 800 teachers) in the entire Baphnom district. Their combined capital exceeds 100 million riels (about USD 25,000).

Lunch was provided at the training venue, allowing more time for interaction between the speakers and the rest of the participants.

In the afternoon, Mr. Khim Sophanna, FNF Cambodia Project Manager, shared his experiences of establishing the CEDAC Credit Cooperative (CCC) and spoke of ACLEDA bank as a case study.

This Cambodian commercial bank was borne out of the International Labour Organisation and the UNDP's micro-savings-and-credit scheme to help aspiring entrepreneurs start up small businesses.

Each participant was asked to think through what they learned in this workshop and to come up with a draft action plan for the next three years. Copies of the action plan sheets were kept for monitoring and evaluation by the project team in the following years.

The organisers received good feedback from participants to previous poverty-reduction workshops. Participants reported that having an action plan helped keep them focus. They also learned useful things from each other such as farming techniques and tips.

Dinner was provided to give everyone more time for social interaction, strengthening solidarity spirit and sharing useful experiences. The event ended at around 7 pm.

### **FNF and Malaysian Partner Provide Training on Short Film Making**

To promote citizen reporting, the Friedrich Naumann Foundation and the Youth and Sports Secretariat of the Selangor Government, launched a pilot project to provide training on short film making for Malaysians.



The "Ampang Speaks through Video Clip" workshop is spread over three Sunday's on 7, 14 and 21 June 2009 at 1100-1700 hours. Participants will learn the basics of film making such as script writing, filming, managing actors, lighting arrangement, applying special effects, as well as sound and image editing.

This project aims at empowering citizens by equipping them with basic reporting and film-making skills to air their concerns on the new media. In the process, local citizens will find it more interesting and even fun to get involved in problems that need to be addressed in their respective community or society. This way they can uncover problems that might be overlooked by relevant authorities and have evidence or information to back up their claims.

Twenty people, aged 17-60, joined the workshop for a subsidised fee of 50 ringgits. Some were university students, pensioners, management executives, business owners, and staff at political organisations.

The training day began with an ice-breaking game. All shared their ideas of what made a good film after being shown some great documentary films. During the screening, they were asked to jot down specific elements about the particular scenes that they liked.

In the afternoon, participants were assigned to do a short shooting exercise in which each conducted an interview and filmed an interviewee and surrounding environment for details. When they returned, trainers reviewed their shots and gave comments on shooting angles, lighting, audio, camera movement and interviewing techniques.

The participants spent the rest of the afternoon going through their footages. Lor Yew Mien, one of the trainers, said the training "provided opportunities for participants to find out about community concerns in Taman Muda area". They got to practice interview techniques and video-making process. With these basic reporting skills, they can report about problems in their community that merit media and authorities' attention.

The second of the three sessions of this video-making workshop, scheduled for 14 June, will focus on editing video shots.

### **FAN Malaysia Conducts Seminar on Liberalism and Secularism**



The Friedrich Naumann Foundation's alumni network known as FAN Malaysia conducted a one-day seminar on liberalism and secularism in Kelantan.

Modeled after the FNF's International Academy of Leadership (IAF), the seminar is part of a replication programme in which former participants to IAF seminars conduct similar seminars or workshops to share what they learned in Germany with fellow citizens in their home countries.

The latest replicated seminar was organised by Mr. Ong Khang Woon, a FAN Malaysia member who attended the Liberalism and Secularism seminar at the IAF in October 2007. It was held on 30 May 2009 at the Sekolah Rendah Kebangsaan Bahagia School, Kuala Krai in Kelantan.

The seminar offered participants the basics of liberalism and secularism as well as relationships between two concepts. There was a video presentation, titled "At the Crossroads – Malaysia," which focused on conversion and related issues such as child custody, enforcing public morality and Malaysia's legal systems.

Discussions during the afternoon group were fruitful. There was a good combination between theoretical background on the topic and how one can apply the concepts in the current situation.

FAN Malaysia was formed in March 2006 after its first alumni meeting in Kuala Lumpur. The main aim of FAN is to promote liberalism through replication of training and other activities. All FAN activities are open to public.

### **FNF Sponsors Strategic Planning Meeting of CALD Women's Caucus in Philippines**

The members of the CALD Women's Caucus concluded its strategic planning meeting held on 19-22 May 2009 in the serene, lush island of Batanes in the northern Philippines. The meeting was organised to evaluate the previous initiatives of the Caucus, to further strengthen and develop the Caucus as an institution that integrates women's focus in CALD activities and that continues to identify key issues and concerns of women in politics, and to establish an action-plan and time-line for its next projects.

The four-day meeting was organised by the Council of Asian Liberals and Democrats (CALD), hosted by the Liberal Party of the Philippines (LP), and supported by the Friedrich Naumann Foundation (FNF).

The LP leaders hosted a dinner reception during the arrival night in Manila. Hon. Erin Tañada, MP, Mr. Chito Gascon, Esq., LP director general, and Ms. Argee Gallardo, LP deputy director general for administration, were among those who welcomed the distinguished guests.

The participants of the meeting were representatives of CALD full-member parties namely: Ms. Jayanthi Devi Balaguru, Central Committee member and secretary general of the National Women's Wing of the Parti Gerakan Rakyat Malaysia (PGRM); Hon. Ly Srey Vyna and Hon. Vanchan Tok, Members of Parliament from the Sam Rainsy Party Cambodia; Ms. Jaslyn Go of the Singapore Democratic Party; Ms. Ingrid Liao, director of the Women's Development Department of the Democratic Progressive Party Taiwan (DPP); Ms. Shalini Senanayake, co-ordinator of the Women's Wing of the Liberal Party of Sri Lanka; and Ms. Evelyn Maduro and Mr. Roscoe Santana of the LP representing the liberal leaders of Batanes.



Dr. Neric Acosta, secretary general of CALD and Mr. Siegfried Herzog, resident representative of FNF Manila, served as facilitators of the meeting.

Hon. Dina Abad, chair of the CALD Women's Caucus and former Member of Parliament in the lone district of Batanes, hosted the participants in Fundacion Pacita, a charming lodge which was once the home studio of internationally-acclaimed artist Pacita Abad. The place was refurbished by Pacita's brother Hon. Butch Abad, former chair of CALD and Secretary (Minister) of Education, who envisioned the nature lodge to provide peaceful accommodations amid a verdant garden where every room was designed to resemble a gallery of masterpieces from both well-known and up-and-coming artists.

At start of the meeting, Hon. Dina Abad presented the brief history of the CALD Women's Caucus and the projects it previously organised. She also explained how important it is for liberal women leaders to get organised so that the remaining restrictions on women's political participation would eventually be lifted and that a women's agenda for CALD would eventually be crafted. She shared the Caucus' vision of encouraging the greater participation of women in leadership roles and added that through frequent dialogues and meetings, the women's agenda would be further honed and strengthened.

It is, however, sad to note that the Caucus has been reactive rather than proactive. But Ms. Abad believes and is optimistic that the next steps of the Caucus would create traction and impact to the women in Asia.

Dr. Neric Acosta said that CALD sought to bring the participants together as an organisation because women's issues have not been given the kind of attention it deserves in the last 15 years of CALD's

existence. "CALD has just marked its 15th year anniversary and while we may have had many milestones, it is fitting that we have a milestone as well for a women's agenda" he added.

The programme of the meeting included four sessions that gave a substantive framework for the Caucus in terms of its trajectory as an organisation and as a venue for the empowerment of women leaders.

Session I talked about the context where women are presently operating. Participants presented their respective backgrounds, political playing fields, and the gender-related issues they tackle. They also explained the current status of the women's agenda in politics and in society.

Ms. Jayanthi Balaguru shared that women in Malaysia experience frequent contradictions in religion vis-à-vis civil law cases. The Sharia Law is at times used as a "tool" for repression and creates legal "grey" areas in custody, inheritance, and divorce issues among others.

Women in Cambodia, as Dr. Ly Srey Vyna shared, are under growing pressure. Cambodian women's dreams are being hampered mostly by men. Even though women have the heart and skills for governance, the stereotype that they're vulnerable and weak keep most of their aspirations constantly blocked.

Session II presented the constraints and challenges in setting up and advancing the women's agenda. Participants shared each others experiences regarding the personal/psychological, policy, economic, and political impediments women currently face.

Participants agreed that women share the burden of struggling to achieve self-worth not only as a mother or as a family member, but also as a professional or member of the domestic workforce. The participants also realised that there are no safety nets for women in most policies concerning migrant workers and right to privacy.

Session III and IV required the Open Space method of facilitation in order for each participant to freely express their ideas and vouch for it. Open Space is a highly participative planning method in which participants self organise around an agenda they create and manage.

The third session was the call for action. During this session, participants presented concrete initiatives on how they can help the Caucus individually and as a party. The fourth session, on the other hand, presented the collective effort of how CALD as an organisation of liberal and democratic parties help promote the Caucus and fulfill its objectives.

The Caucus agreed to set-up a website of its own with the assistance of the CALD secretariat. Ms. Balaguru of PGRM volunteered to be the liaison for video interviews of women leaders in Asia which will be uploaded on the CALD Women's Caucus website. The plenary also talked about the possibility of a women's desk/secretariat to make the projects and initiatives of the Caucus more centralised and coordinated.

Founded in June 2006, the CALD Women's Caucus is committed to the "Win with Women Global Action Plan" spearheaded by the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, a CALD partner organisation promoting strategies for increasing women political leadership worldwide.

## REPORTS

### IPN: Nearly a Quarter of Million People Die from Fake Malaria and Tuberculosis Drugs



About 700,000 people die annually from fake malaria and tuberculosis drugs, according to the report "Keeping It Real – Combating the Spread of Fake Drugs in Poor Countries" recently released by the International Policy Network (IPN).

The UK-based NGO claims shocking revelations such as: nearly half the drugs sold in Angola, Burundi, and the Congo are substandard; about two-thirds of artesunate (anti-malaria) drugs in Laos, Myanmar Cambodia and Vietnam contain insufficient active ingredients, and that most fake drugs come from China and India

Current attempts to deal with the problem through tougher regulation and penalty do not address the root causes of counterfeiting. In some countries, regulatory and legal loopholes make it easy for counterfeiters to carry out their business. Some governments exacerbate the problem by making legitimate drugs more expensive and less affordable through taxes and tariffs.

Julian Harris, one of the three authors of the report, said "Many poor countries have weak or nonexistent trademark laws, so it's no surprise that counterfeits are rife. A free press, free courts, and free trade would actually increase the quality of medicines."

To download the report, please follow this URL

[http://policynetwork.net/uploaded/pdf/keeping\\_it\\_real\\_2009.pdf](http://policynetwork.net/uploaded/pdf/keeping_it_real_2009.pdf)

## **NGOs: Seoul Fails To Investigate South Korean Firms' Involvement in Abuses Connected to Burma Gas Project**

*Government's Rejection of Complaint for Violation of OECD Guidelines Shows Unwillingness to Prevent Human Rights & Environment Abuses*

The South Korean government is failing to hold Korean corporations accountable for abuses connected to natural gas development in military ruled Burma, EarthRights International (ERI) and the Shwe Gas Movement (SGM) says in their report released on 15 June.

The report, titled "A Governance Gap: The Failure of the Korean Government to Hold Korean Corporations Accountable to the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises Regarding Violations in Burma," details how the Korean government summarily rejected a 43-page complaint filed in October 2008 by ERI, SGM and nine co-complainants, including Korea's two largest labor organizations regarding abuses connected to the Shwe Gas Project, a large-scale natural gas development project in Burma led by Korea's Daewoo International, their joint press release says.

The report explains substantive problems with Korea's decision, which was issued in late 2008. It highlights how the Korean decision is inconsistent with decisions from NCPs in other countries, and documents inherent conflicts of interest within the Korean government: The ministry tasked with receiving OECD complaints is the same ministry tasked with promoting overseas energy development projects and the same ministry that provided Daewoo a sizable loan to proceed with the controversial Shwe Project. To download the 24-page report, please click on this link

<http://www.earthrights.org/files/Reports/A-Governance-Gap-Report.pdf>

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