

The Southeast and East Asia Office of the Friedrich Naumann Foundation

Friedrich Naumann
STIFTUNG **FÜR DIE FREIHEIT**

The FNF is a non-profit organization that promotes liberalism, democracy, respect for human rights, economic freedom and rule of law.

E-Newsletter MAY 2009

FNF Chairman: Attempts To Remove Market Economy Systems May Backfire

Wolfgang Gerhardt, chairman of the Friedrich Naumann Foundation, warned anti-capitalist politicians that any attempt to remove a market economy system to achieve social justice may backfire.

History proves that the removal of a free market system often leads to unhealthy economic and political power developments which eventually result in the breakdown of economic and political systems of that country. Supporters of such practice usually become helpless "victims who have been exploited in the name of justice and solidarity," Mr. Gerhardt said in his recent article "Market Economy, Justice and the Return of Liberal Values".

In the article, Mr. Gerhardt also warned that in the run-up to the German presidential and federal elections, vote seekers need to do more than finding new sources of funds to support the country's fragile welfare system to ensure that their words would not become empty promises.

He commented that the present welfare system in which certain groups of people are given government support "is not fair" and cannot prevent "social exclusion" the way socialism is intended.

In a liberal society, the government will play a minimum, yet important role in empowering citizens with a sense of responsibility and freedom to enable them to design their own lives. "It will not hinder people in addressing their own concerns, and will help those who need help," he explains.

For this reason, Mr. Gerhardt said people should not mistake legitimated demands for justice for a fostered hope for equality. "A liberal society is dependent upon a culture that accepts differences and inequalities that cannot be resolved." Social responsibility does not manifest itself "in the rhetoric of weakening the strong but in encouraging and empowering the weak."

The seven-page article, published in German, is available for download at the following URL:

http://www.freiheit.org/webcom/show_article_bb.php/_c-616/_nr-10784/i.html

Source: www.fnst.org

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Marktwirtschaft und Gerechtigkeit –
Für ein Comeback der Werte

Podcast Training at FNF Regional Office in Bangkok "A Success"

The Southeast and East Asia office of the Friedrich Naumann Foundation organised a podcast training workshop at its Bangkok office.

Although participants were not equally technically savvy to begin with, they all learned how to create a podcast and to edit sound files for professional use. Several participants described the workshop as "a success". Each had a chance to produce an individual podcast and to work in a group for a podcast.



Held on 27-29 April 2009, the podcast training workshop also provided an opportunity for FNF colleagues from Thailand, Cambodia, Korea, Malaysia, Indonesia and regional projects to meet and get to know more about each other.

The 14 participants benefitted immensely from the experience of their colleague from Jakarta, Vera Putri, who was the resource person for this workshop. Ms. Vera works for FNF Indonesia office for which she runs a highly successful website, publishes podcasts and conducts liberal training programmes.

This workshop is part of a larger capacity-building initiative to help FNF staff harness the power of technology in their efforts to promote liberal democracy and freedom on a wider scale even more effectively.

FAN Malaysia Conducts Replicated IAF Seminar on Facilitation

Leong Lai Ming, a member of the Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Liberty Alumni Network (FAN) Malaysia, replicated a seminar she had attended at the International Academy for Leadership (IAF) on facilitation for young activists and other FNF alumni members.



The objectives of the seminar which took place on Saturday 10 April 2009 in Kuala Lumpur were for IAF alumni members to share the knowledge and experience they had gained from attending IAF training programmes with fellow Malaysians at home and to strengthen the FNF alumni network in Malaysia.

The seminar was divided into 2 parts: principles of facilitation and practice of facilitation skills. Participatory approach was used to engage participants in all sessions. The theoretical part covered the role of facilitator and facilitation skills and the do's and don'ts of facilitating.

Meta-plans and flip charts were used to show different types of visualisation. To practice what they learned, eight participants volunteered to facilitate in different sessions, including energiser, Idea on One Malaysia, English as a Medium of Instruction for Math and Science, and a debate on the political situation in Perak.

Most participants attended the seminar with the expectation to learn new techniques and improve facilitation skills while a few came for networking. During the evaluation session, most participants said the seminar gave them hands-on experiences and that they had a fair chance of practicing what they learnt. They mentioned gaining higher self-confidence in facilitation, but said they needed more time to master the new techniques.

FAN Malaysia will organise another replicated IAF seminar on Political Communication on 13 June 2009 in Kuala Lumpur, exclusively for FNF alumni members. For more information, please write to pimrapaat@fnst.org or visit www.fnfmalaysia.org.

Young Liberals Re-evaluate, Remake Strategic Plan

To remain resilient and dynamic in the rapidly changing world, the Young Liberals and Democrats of Asia (YLDA) held a capacity building workshop in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia on 29 April-3 May 2009.

Hosted by Parti Gerakan Rakyat and with the support of the Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Liberty (FNF), YLDA evaluated its past achievements, identified its current realities and discussed redefining its mission.

Representatives from member organisations and the Executive Committee reaffirmed that YLDA's key stakeholders are its member organisations and the Asian youth. Thus the organisation must renew its efforts of capacity building, education and mobilization.

After assessing YLDA's current state, participants drew up a new strategic plan to bring to focus its organisational needs and challenges. These are: to strengthen and expand membership participation, to make liberal democracy more attractive to Asian youth, to increase focus on regional issues and to attain financial sustainability by 2012.



To tackle these, participants identified concrete courses of action such as: using Web 2.0 to portray YLDA as a modern organisation, researching on country situations and producing campaign plans to address these and creating a task force to prepare a more detailed expansion plan.

"As with any other effective organisation, we believe that it is important to re-evaluate the kind of work we do every few years," said Rosanna Ocampo, YLDA programme officer. "We wanted to change things that didn't work in order to keep our strategic plan relevant."

"Strategic planning is useful in charting YLDA's future direction," said Dr. Pimrapa Dusadeeisariyakul, FNF Malaysia programme manager. "But more than that, what was encouraging was the commitment of the participants to share their knowledge with their organisations upon return."

Source: www.fnf.org.ph

YLDA Creates Strategic Plan 2009-2012

The Young Liberals and Democrats of Asia created its strategic plan for the next three years during its recent Strategic Planning Workshop. This was hosted by the Parti Gerakan Rakyat on 29 April-3 May at the Seri Cempaka Service Suites in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The programme was supported by the Friedrich Naumann Foundation.



Facilitated by Ms. Mardi Mapa-Suplido, the workshop aimed to teach participants from member organisations the skills needed to help their respective organisations create or revise their strategic plans. While learning the methods, participants also developed an actual plan for YLDA. Prior to this, YLDA's last strategic planning workshop was in 2004. The last strategic plan was created in 2007.

Participants from member organisations and the Executive Committee were first asked to redefine YLDA's mission and passion and identify current global realities, organisational needs and challenges. While YLDA's key stakeholders are its member organisations and the Asian youth, its priorities are capacity building, learning and training and education and mobilisation. It also calls upon its member organisations for greater participation in its efforts, especially in publicizing YLDA through the Internet.

After narrowing down the main objectives of the strategic plan, participants identified concrete actions and committees to work toward each goal.

The objectives of the strategic plan are to strengthen membership participation and expand membership, to promote values of liberal democracy and make YLDA more attractive to Asian youth, to strengthen and expand YLDA's advocacy to focus on regional issues, to attain financial sustainability for YLDA by 2012 and to build a focused, defined, effective and efficient organisation.

Source: www.yldasia.org

VDO: Cooperating for Freedom - LI and FNF

Mohammad Tamaldou, president of the Network of Arab Liberals, said the NAL stood for rule of law, equality and free market.

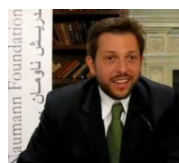
Words like democracy and participation are practically meaningless in the Arab world, but the NAL and its partner organisations including the FNF are working to help turn these words into action and reality. Mr. Tamaldou concluded that it has been proven in the Arab world that conservative societies do not lead to stable governance.



He was speaking at a seminar on the political role of regional and international liberal networks. The 2 April 2009 seminar in Cairo, which attracted over 70 participants, was moderated by Dr. Osama El Ghazaly Harb, president of the Democratic Front Party of Egypt.

To watch the video, please click on the following URL: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=niepRjbXdAI>

VDO: Cooperating for Freedom - LI and FNF



LI Secretary General Emil Kirjas spoke of the cooperation with the Friedrich Naumann Foundation in promoting liberalism and the Liberal International Congress 2009 in Cairo in October.

He was speaking at a seminar on the political role of regional and international liberal networks. The 2 April 2009 seminar in Cairo, which attracted over 70 participants, was moderated by Dr. Osama El Ghazaly Harb, president of the Democratic Front Party of Egypt.

To watch the video, please click on the following URL:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2EVAIplV57s>

Polls: Thais Want Reconciliation; Okay with Amnesty for Political Offenders

The majority of Thais agree with the opposition Pheu Thai party's proposal to give amnesty to political offenders, including Thaksin Shinawatra, for the sake of reconciliation between the pro- and anti-government groups.

The results of two separate polls by two leading pollsters showed most Thais wish to see peace in society as soon as possible and agreed with a proposal of passing a law to offer amnesty to political offenders, but not criminal offenders, involved in the September 2006 coup, the seizure of the Government House, the closure of Bangkok airports, the riot during Songkarn, and the protest that forced the abrupt cancellation of the 14th Asean summit in Pattaya.

68.7% of Thais interviewed by the Assumption University's ABAC Poll on 26 April said they agreed with the idea of constitutional amendment as a way of achieving political reconciliation and ending social disunity. 68.9% supported the anti-government movement by the pro-Thaksin Democratic Alliance against Dictatorship (DAAD), also called the Red Shirt, as long as it is not violent or causes trouble for others. 51.9% wanted the government to respond to the DAAD's demand to dissolve Parliament and call for a new general election.

A separate survey by the Suan Dusit Rajabhat University's Suan Dusit Poll on 24-26 April showed 68.7% of the 3,079 respondents agreed with constitutional amendment and while 31.3% disagreed with the proposal. The same poll found that 64.9% agreed with giving amnesty to political offenders while 35.1% disagreed with the idea.

The military ousted former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra and rewrote the constitution. The new military-backed charter, currently in use, includes a clause that provides amnesty for military officials involved in the September 2006 coup.

The Pheu Thai party said the recent riots and protests by the Red Shirt heightened the need for political reconciliation between those who support Mr. Thaksin and those who loathe him.

The opposition party suggested passing a law that amounts to giving amnesty to political offenders from the pro- and anti-government sides. The proposed legislation would also be extended to 111 executive members of the now-defunct Thai Rak Thai Party founded by Mr. Thaksin. Shortly after the 2006 coup, these politicians were ordered a five-year ban from politics while their party was forced to dissolve.



The Pheu Thai party backs Mr. Thaksin who insisted that he was unfairly tried in his absence and that he was democratically elected to premiership while Mr. Abhisit Vejjajiva came to power with the help of the Yellow Shirt and the military. Living in self-exile, Mr. Thaksin told his supporters to rise against the current government led by his nemesis, Prime Minister Abhisit, leader of the Democrat Party. "I will fight for justice—whether I have to fight for justice in Heaven or in Hell. I am a fighter. I will not give up," Mr. Thaksin told reporters in March in a live press conference conducted via an audio visual feed.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Abhisit refuted criticism that his administration is applying double standards towards political offenders, the People Alliance for Democracy (PAD) or the Yellow Shirt that seized the Suvarnabhumi Airport in December and the Red Shirt that caused riots in Bangkok in April. PAD supporters involved in the closure of Bangkok airports were ordered to pay a fine of between 5,000 and 10,000 baht, a penalty that many regarded as next to nothing considering the trillions of baht of losses that the export, tourism and airline industries suffered. The satellite D Channel, which aired the Red Shirt protests live, was ordered to suspend broadcasting shortly after the riots took place whereas the anti-Thaksin ASTV Channel was allowed to broadcast the Yellow Shirt protests.

Sources: ABAC Poll and Suan Dusit Poll, Banmuang newspaper, April 2009
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Invitation to Documentary Film Contest and Festival

The Centre for Civil Society is inviting aspiring film makers to join its documentary film competition. Winning entries will be shown at the Jeevika Film Festival 2009.



The contest is open to people of all professions who are citizens of any nations provided the documentary focuses on the livelihood of the individuals & communities of the following Asian nations: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Brunei, Cambodia, East Timor, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam, People's Republic of China, Hong Kong, Japan, Macau, Mongolia, North Korea, South Korea and Taiwan.

Contestants are free to choose one of the following themes for their films: governance, gender, environment, human rights, rural livelihood, urban livelihood, or folk art and culture. Prizes include USD4,000 cash, certificates and advocacy grants.

The deadline for submitting competition entries is 15 June 2009.

The Jeevika Film Festival 2009 will be held on 28-30 August 2009 at the India Habitat Centre in New Delhi.

For more information, please visit www.jeevika.org.

A partner organisation of the Friedrich Naumann Foundation, the New Delhi-based Centre for Civil Society is an independent, non-profit, research and educational organisation devoted to improving the quality of life for all citizens of India by reviving and reinvigorating civil society.

World Bank: A Pro-Poor Stimulus Package Favours the Whole Economy

As the global recession threatens to hamstring the pace of poverty reduction everywhere, many countries—both rich and poor—hope to cushion the blow through a fiscal stimulus.

Some of the pressing questions that governments are trying to grapple with include the size of such stimulus packages, the types of spending they should consist of, and the channels through which they might work most efficiently to stimulate the economy.

Martin Ravallion, Director of the World Bank's Development Research Group, and an expert on global poverty, emphasizes that there are many reasons why a stimulus that favors poorer people is more likely to have a stronger impact than one that does not.

"There's an obvious ethical reason why a stimulus should favor poor people, but there's also a macroeconomic rationale," said Mr. Ravallion, "Poor people, who are typically more constrained by a lack of credit, are much more likely to quickly consume or invest extra cash that becomes available through some form of stimulus."

Historically, rich countries have taken countercyclical actions to stabilize their economies in times of economic stress through direct taxes and committed social spending.

"If there's one thing that should not be missed during this crisis, it's the opportunity to create pro-poor stabilizers in developing countries, similar to the automatic social safety nets that rich countries already have in place," he added.

Increasingly, both rich and poor countries' welfare reform efforts have tried to highlight the notion of "co-responsibility"—helping people to escape poverty now while also taking actions that reduce dependency on welfare in the long run.

"It is difficult—but critical—to strike a balance between immediate relief and long-term poverty reduction," said Mr. Ravallion.

Robust social protection policies require a combination of relief work with transfers in cash or food targeted to specific groups who cannot work due to physical incapacity (including poor nutritional status, with the number of chronically hungry people set to cross 1 billion in 2009) or who should not be taken out of other activities such as school.

"With a combination of well-designed and implemented conditional transfers and relief work schemes it is possible to protect a significant number of poor people in a crisis, without damaging their longer-term prospects of escaping poverty," he said.

Source: www.worldbank.org, an excerpt of the article "Social Safety Nets: Lessons from Rich and Poor Countries".

7 Thai Media Associations Call on Abhisit Government To Respect Press Freedom

Seven Thai media associations joined the Southeast Asian Press Alliance (SEAPA) in officially calling on the Abhisit administration to respect press freedom while urging all local media outlets to uphold the journalistic principles of accuracy and fairness to all sides.

These media associations insist that "freedom of expression is a fundamental right of every individual. Media freedom is the people's freedom." In their joint statement issued on the World Press Freedom Day 3 May, they make the following proposals:

"1. The government must not take any direct or indirect action to interfere with the media's duty and to block the flow of information through any means such as the Internet, satellite television and community radios.

Any media outlets found violating the law shall be dealt with in accordance with due legal process and in a transparent, fair and non-discriminatory manner, without resorting to any illegal means to limit freedom of opinions.

2. The government must be sincere in reforming the laws that pose obstacles to freedom of expression of the people and accepting pluralism in the media in providing different perspectives in news and information and opinions to benefit the public's right to information.

3. Politicians, members of the House of Representatives and the Senate and adherents of opposing political camps must understand the role and the duty of the media in seeking news and the truth for the benefit of the public. All sides must stop inciting people to go against the media by all means, including halting the use of the media to propagate and incite violence or exacerbate the conflict.

4. The public must be considerate in receiving news and information and be open-minded to listen to difference views of the media outlets. They should exercise great caution in receiving information from the media especially those used as tools by political groups, and those issuing biased and prejudiced reports, with the intention of creating rifts and instigate the use of violence in resolving conflicts.

5. All media outlets, especially those used as tools of political groups, must not slant their reports which would only result in more conflicts and violence. They must uphold professional ethics and take into account the principles of accuracy and fairness to all sides, and not resort to competition in order to avoid confusion and misunderstanding among the public."

The signatories include: the Press Council of Thailand, Federation of Thai Journalists, Thai Journalists Association, Thai Broadcast Journalists Association, Thai Economic Reporters Association, Thai Webmasters Association, Association of Thai Cable Operators, and Southeast Asian Press Alliance (SEAPA).

"All signatories to this statement insist that freedom of expression of the people and of the media are important to the development of Thai democracy. All forms of actions by any sides that infringe upon freedom of expression of the people and of the media are not acceptable," their joint statement said.

Source: SEAPA (www.seapa.org)

Cambodian Media Group Calls on Phnom Penh To End Violence against Journalists

The Cambodian Association for the Protection of Journalists CAPJ calls on the government to take a firm stand to put an end to violence against journalists and permanently end the culture of impunity in Cambodia.

CAPJ President Um Sarin said in a 4 May 2009 statement that the press freedom situation in Cambodia in the year 2008 slightly improved compared to 2007 and still maintained a good score among countries in Southeast Asia in spite of the existing negative points such as the arrests of journalists, the threats and lawsuits brought forward against them, the denial of access to information to media workers and the numerous pending and unsolved cases dating back to 1993.

CAPJ recorded 32 violations of press freedom in 2008. These include 14 arrests, six incidents of threat, two lawsuits, three cases involving the temporary halt of publication and broadcast, three cases of camera and recorder seizures, three duty-related injuries and road accidents and one case of killing.

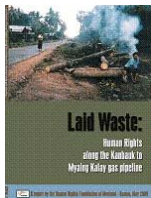
Along with the above-mentioned incidents, CAPJ deplores the lack of freedom to freely operate the electronic media as this type of platform continues to be dominated by the ruling party thus giving an unfair opportunity for other parties to make their messages heard to the grassroots people. CAPJ insists on a change of this trend.

CAPJ appeals to the judiciary system to refer to the 1994 Press Law when passing judgment to an accused Cambodian journalist. It also expresses its full endorsement of the recent statement of donor countries' representatives dated 28 April 2009 which called on the Cambodian government to speed up the process of adopting the Anti-Corruption Law and to guarantee the public in general, and the Cambodian press in particular, the right to access information.

CAPJ also would like to make an appeal to the media owners to help upgrade the journalists' living condition by ensuring a decent salary and other benefits for their employees in order to help curb corruption among Cambodian journalists. Furthermore, it expects the journalists to strictly abide by the media code of ethics in order to place a high value on their profession and avoid a breach of professional ethics.

Source: Southeast Asian Press Alliance (www.seapa.org)
To contact Mr. Um Sarin, please write to umsarin59@yahoo.com or umsarin@hotmail.com.

REPORTS



The 100-page report **“Laid Waste: Human Rights along the Kanbauk to Myaing Kalay gas pipeline”** details abuses along the entire length of an overland pipeline that traverses nearly half the length of Burma's southern peninsula.

Published by the Human Rights Foundation of Monland, the report can be downloaded at <http://rehmonnya.org/archives/752>.



“Not Yet a Workers' Paradise: Vietnam's Suppression of the Independent Workers' Movement” documents the crackdown on independent trade unions and profiles labour rights activists who have been detained, placed under house arrest, or imprisoned by the Vietnamese government.

Published by Human Rights Watch, the 32-page report is available at <http://www.hrw.org/node/82862>

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