



9th Asia Pacific Co-operative Ministers Conference



The Minister of Agriculture and Cooperatives, the Deputy Prime Minister of Thailand and ICA President at the opening of the Conference

The 9th Asia Pacific Co-operative Ministers' Conference held on 27-29 February 2012 at UNCC in Bangkok, convened by ICA-AP and hosted by the Government of the Kingdom of Thailand was attended by 14 Co-operative Ministers and about 300 delegates including government representatives, international delegates and ICA members from the Asia Pacific Region.

The conference was inaugurated by the Honourable Deputy Prime Minister of Thailand, His Excellency Mr. Chumpol Silpa-Archa who delivered the inaugural address. The Deputy Prime Minister highlighted the significance of co-operatives in the national economy and social stability and therefore, the government is committed to support and promote growth of co-operatives.

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From the Editor



This is a special issue covering the 9th Asia-Pacific Co-operative Ministers Conference.

The conference witnessed historic participation of largest number of ministers, govt. representatives and co-operators. Some significant issues emerged and some new concerns voiced by the speakers which gives birth to need of diversification and changes in the way co-operatives use to think and work. The usual concerns of relationship with government, competition in the market etc taken over with recommendations for creating conducive environment, special fund, introducing sectoral law, new charter of cooperatives, strong concern for environment and conservation of natural resources, larger and durable space in the national economy and synergy with other civil societies. The co-operatives have proved their mettle during the economic and natural calamities in several nations and forced the governments to sit back and think of providing co-operatives their logical space.

Readers are invited to share news & views to make this newsletter more interactive.

Savitri Singh

Upcoming Events

- Capacity Building on Marketing for Agricultural Co-operatives, China, April-2012
- RWC Office Bearers Meeting-Philippines, April 2012

Mr. Theera Wongsamut, Honourable Minister of Agriculture and Co-operatives extended warm welcome to the delegates and also delivered the Key note address on the conference theme: "Sufficiency economy and co-operatives." The concept of sufficiency economy developed by His Majesty the King of Thailand was taken up as the conference theme addressed by the Minister of Thailand who gave an ethical definition of sufficiency implying moderation in consumption and behaviour and capacity to create within the individual and social system, a degree of immunity from shortages and deficiencies by proactive action with the use of knowledge and perseverance as the moral foundation of the people.



His Excellency Mr. Chumpol Silpa- Archa delivering the opening address



Mr. Theera Wongsamut, Honourable Minister of Agriculture and Co-operatives, Thailand delivering Key Note Speech

Exuding happiness at the excellent arrangements made and positive response of the governments and the ICA members, Dame Pauline Green, President ICA informed that this conference had about the largest ever participation of the ministers and ICA delegates. Mr. Li Chunsheng, President ICA-Asia Pacific expressed deep appreciation for the support of the Royal Government of Thailand for hosting the conference and the warm hospitality extended to delegates.



The Deputy Prime Minister of Thailand arriving to Conference with ICA President



Overview of the conference

Dame Pauline Green, in her special address, highlighted facts to establish the unstated yet significant role of co-operatives in global economy as co-operatives have one billion members as compared to just 327 million share holders of companies listed in the stock markets and the net worth of 300 globally successful co-operatives published every year is about US \$ 1.6 trillion. She however regretted that the present role of cooperatives in environment and conservation and its future potential in this field were not noted in the Rio Conference and ICA has been trying to include Co-operatives as an item in the forthcoming Rio+20 conclave.

The Conference Honoured Mr. Shill Kwan Lee for successfully organising three Co-operative Ministers' Conferences during his tenure as the Regional Director of ICA-AP from the year 2002-2009.

There were 36 speakers from 21 countries including 14 Cooperative Ministers, 3 international organisations; FAO, ILO and ACCU besides 4 Government representatives and cooperative success stories presentation by the ICA-AP members. Honourable Co-operative Ministers as listed below attended the conference and made statement:

1. Honourable Vice Minister Mr. Shuji Yamada, Ministry of agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, Japan
2. Mr. Enkhbold Nyamaa, Deputy Speaker of the Mongolian Parliament and President of National Association of Mongolian Cooperatives
3. Honourable Mr. Harish Rawat, Minister of State for Agriculture, India
4. Honourable Minister Reza Sheykhoslam, Ministry of Cooperatives, Labor and Social Welfare, Islamic Republic of Iran

5. Mr. Yang Berhomat Pehin Orang Kaya Seri Utama Dato Seri Setia Awang Haji Yahya Bin Begawan Mudim Dato Paduka Haji Bakar, Hon'ble Minister of Industry & Primary Resources, Brunei
6. Honourable Minister Dato' Sri Ismail Sabri Bin Yaakob, Minister of Domestic Trade, Co-operative and Consumerism, Government of Malaysia
7. Honourable Minister Theera Wongsamut, Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives, Kingdom of Thailand
8. H.E. Dr. Phouangparisak Pravongviengkham Vice Minister of Agriculture and Forestry, MAF, Government of Laos
9. Honourable Minister Syarifuddin Hasan, SE, MM, MBA, Ministry of Cooperatives & SMEs, Indonesia



ICA President honouring Mr. Shil Kwan Lee



Mr. Nattawoot Saikuar, Ms. Pauline Green, Mr. Li Chunsheng and Dr. Chan Ho Choi

10. Honourable Syed Asrafur Islam, Minister for local Government, Rural Development and Co-operatives, Bangladesh
11. Honourable Minister Mr. Johnston Fernando, Ministry of Co-operatives and Internal Trade Affairs, Government of Sri Lanka
12. Honourable Mr. Seyed Nezamaldin Sajadi, Deputy of Jihad-e- Agriculture Minister, Islamic Republic of Iran
13. Honourable Deputy Minister Mr. Nguyen Dang Khoa Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, Government of Vietnam
14. Honourable Minister Dr. Pema Gyamtsho, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Royal Government of Bhutan

The important highlights of the statements made by the Honourable Ministers are as follows:

1. Concerns about the unsustainable exploitation of natural resources for profits only and that commodification of public goods, rising prices, privatization of public services have been causing massive hardships for the common people and the co-operatives must step in to institutionally counter these adversities.
2. To expand the base of the co-operatives it is imperative that the activities of the SHGs, Micro Credit and Micro Finance Institutions, NGOs and Civil Society groups with shared values and methods of organisation are brought within the ambit of co-operatives.
3. Empowerment of women could be achieved by innovative programmes such as tree plantation in Mongolia and forming women led Dairy co-operatives as achieved in India, Bangladesh and elsewhere.
4. The Governments of Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia, Bangladesh, Brunei, Bhutan Iran Mongolia, Nepal and Sri Lanka reported policy, law and institutional changes

made to create an environment conducive to co-operative development, while Philippines and Laos emphasised measures to make farms increasingly use organic methods through the co-operative mechanism with support from the Government to bring about balanced agriculture development.

5. The Islamic Republic of Iran projected the present share of co-operatives in the GDP at 9% and a target of 25% to be achieved in five years due to the concerted efforts of the Government to strengthen and expand the co-operatives and suggested formation of a consortium of Governments to support co-

operatives and a common chamber of co-operatives and regional and international unions for all co-operatives.

6. Japan, Korea and Vietnam informed the conference about new mechanism to promote ethical consumerism and co-operatives becoming an integral part of economic transformation programmes with emphasis on upgrading the capacities of co-operatives to take up larger business activities. Mr. Shuji Yamada informed the exemplary work of Agricultural Co-operatives in providing relief to the victims of last year's devastating earthquake and highlighted their role in food security, sustainable development and diversified activities leading to diffusion of democracy. Considering the positive role of co-operatives, the National Planning Committee is engaged in the preparation of a comprehensive plan for co-operatives in Japan.
7. The Minister from India informed that the co-operatives are taking up a wide range of diverse activities and also informed about the legal and policy reforms undertaken by the government to reform the sector and in particular the credit sector.



Meeting with the Press



The Conference in progress

8. The Minister of Bhutan stated that Bhutan has taken up a plan to promote co-operatives to achieve holistic human development in line with its development philosophy of Gross National Happiness which goes beyond GDP based on only material factors. The co-operative law 2009 has been enacted to provide the framework under which 170 co-operatives have been functioning. Bhutan supports the ICA Principles at this stage and is keen to actively participate in the UN and ICA work relating to co-operatives.
9. The President of the Co-operative League of Thailand urged upon creation of a strong capital base needed by co-operatives of the region. Hence special funding arrangements are to be created by the Governments to facilitate the growth of co-operatives.
10. The representative from Nepal stated that the co-operatives are to be the foundation of Nepal's economy based on multipurpose co-operatives, micro enterprises, and diary co-operatives with emphasis on participation of women and disadvantaged sections. A new Co-operative Law in conformity with ICA Principles is under preparation. Reforms in co-operative Policy are being considered under a mission mode approach to achieve professionalization and efficiency to raise share of co-operatives in the GDP from the current 1 level of about 3.2%.
11. The representative from Kuwait stated that the concept of co-operation is rooted in Kuwaiti tradition of community help which the Government has harnessed to develop co-operatives in different spheres.

At the end of each session, the conference provided an open forum for the delegates to participate in the proceedings.

Several governments argued for special funding mechanisms for the development of co-operatives by initiating a Special Co-operative Fund and submitted their presentation materials.

In order to make the conference more effective, the ICA-AP is commissioning critical study of cooperative law and policy of countries in the region before every conference which is being presented and discussed in the conference. This study gives an insight of prevalent practices and 'what is working what is not' which is meant to help the ministers and stake holder in creating a road map for future progress. This time also the 4th Critical Study was completed by Mr.Rangan Dutta, Sr. Consultant of ICA-AP and was presented by him at the conference.

The proceedings of the conference were concluded with the

adoption of the Joint Declaration, consideration of the conference report and the concluding address by the Honourable Deputy Minister of Agriculture and Co-operation of The Kingdom of Thailand, Mr. Nattawoot Saikuar. Dr. Chan Ho CHOI, Regional Director of ICA-AP expressed his deep appreciation and gratitude for the warm hospitality and

all round support provided by the Government of Thailand and also acknowledged with gratitude the support of the Honourable Ministers and delegates by attending and actively participating in the conference.

The conference report and all the speeches and presentations are placed on the ICA-AP website.

Governance

Regional Board Meeting



Board members and observers

The meeting of the ICA-AP Regional Board was held in Bangkok on Sunday, 26th February 2012. 30 persons including Board members, officials and observers were present.

Mr. Li Chunsheng, President, ICA-AP welcomed the board members and extended warm welcome to all and especially to Dame Pauline Green, President of ICA who was also present. Dame Pauline Green came to Thailand to attend the meeting of the ICA Domus Trust and the 9th Asia-Pacific Co-operative Ministers Conference which was to be opened next day. He also welcomed the youth representative - Ms. Tahmineh Kashani of CURACI, Iran – for attending the board meeting for the first time.

Dame Pauline Green thanked Mr. Li Chunsheng for making excellent arrangements for the meeting. She said that 2012 is an important year for international cooperative movement and we have a key job to do. International economy is still in a

chaotic situation. In this context, she thinks the message we have given to the UN that we need more diversified economy is a critical one.

She underlined the importance of cooperatives that has over 10 billion members across the globe compared to shareholders of companies listed in the stock market that is just 327 million. The list of Global 300 successful cooperatives published each year alone is worth 1.6 trillion US dollars from 25 countries including Asia. She extended an invitation to all members to the closing of the international year of cooperatives on 31st October 2012 in Manchester. She also informed that there would be a special General Assembly of ICA where key issues would be discussed and the invitation will be sent soon. Ms. Green also appreciated the region for the good work being done.

She informed the meeting about the ICA Domus Trust meeting held in the morning of 26th February at the same venue

wherein trustees/members have finally reached to an agreement on the appointment of trustees which has been pending for a long time. She specially thanked Dr. Chandra Pal Singh for taking the right way forward. She informed the meeting that there were two different kinds of advices from the lawyers and hence a practical way had to be found.

The meeting conducted usual business of approval of the current agenda and minutes of the last meeting, report of the activities, financial report and ratification of the substitute Board member from Vietnam etc.

Dr. Choi also informed about 3,000 books received from ICA, Geneva to Delhi office library and plan is to digitalize the library so that the member organizations would be able to retrieve these documents through ICA-AP home page.

Talking about membership situation of the region, Dr. Choi informed that Pishgaman Kavir Yazd Cooperative Company (PKYCC) of Iran has applied for membership of ICA and National Federation of Urban Cooperative Banks and Credit Societies Limited (NAFCUB) of India ceased to be a member of ICA due to non-payment of membership. The current total membership of ICA-AP is 77 organizations from 25 countries. Constitutions of ICA-AP Sectoral/ Thematic Committees were also discussed. There is need to review the constitutions of the committees and there should be a model Constitution to increase the participation of members in a democratic way and achieve the objectives.

Mr. Phanuwat Wanraway, Chief of International Department, Cooperative League of Thailand made a presentation on Thailand's Flood Disaster in 2011 and Rehabilitation Plan of CLT for the benefit of the members. The CLT thanked the members for their generous financial support.

Dr. Choi informed the meeting that the 10th Meeting of ICA-AP Regional Assembly and Related Events would be held in Kobe (Japan) from 26th to 30th November 2012. The venue of the meeting would be Kobe International Conference Centre.

Agenda on Celebrations of IYC-2012 also came up for discussion. Dr. Choi requested the board members to send information about their activities to be posted on the ICA-AP website to be shared with others.

The members informed that the following activities would be hosted by their respective countries:

Singapore:

- (a) The International Year of Cooperatives 2012 celebration comprises 3 events; a 1-day conference on 3rd October that focuses on "How social capital drives profits, growth and sustainability".
- (b) Auto venture with 150 vehicles from Singapore to Kuala Lumpur.
- (c) Coop Hot Shots – a photography competition with the 5 competition themes: cooperation, self-help, equality, mutual help, care for others during 1st March to 30th April.

India:

National Co-operative Congress will be held in April. The President of India would be inaugurating. It is going to be a big event.

Indonesia:

- (a) International cooperative day celebrations in July.
- (b) International seminar on role of cooperatives.
- (c) IYC will also be celebrated at provincial level.

Malaysia:

- (a) Auto venture.
- (b) Setting up of a factory for clean drinking water.

China:

- (a) Organize series of events at national, provincial and primary level including exhibition, fair, workshops etc.
- (b) Trade networking.
- (c) Cultural activities.
- (d) The 2012 International Year of Cooperatives Symposium, Beijing, 11-13 June.

From the Region:

NZ's Official IYC 2012 Launch

Minister of Commerce Hon Craig Foss MP will be launching the UN International Year of Cooperatives on 27 March 2012 in the Grand Hall, Parliament Buildings. Blue Read, Cooperatives Association Chair; Piet Moerland, Rabobank Netherlands Executive Board Chair and Dame Pauline Green, International Co-operatives Alliance President will be the main speakers of the occasion.

For more information visit: <http://nz.coop/iyc/>

Australia

Australia is the first country to have postage stamps and a coin issued in celebration of UN International year of Co-operatives in 2012. Dame Pauline Green, President of the International Co-operative Alliance, spoke on the occasion about the important role of co-operatives in bringing about a new era in socially responsible businesses.

iCoop Korea launches The IYC

The IYC-2012 was launched on 12 January-2012 in Seoul and about 100 co-operators joined the celebration.

Member Services

The Sahakar Bharati, an Indian cooperative which is member of NCUI has organised an international conference on the eve of International Year of Cooperatives-2012 on February, 2012 in Bhopal. They invited Dr. Chan Ho CHOI, Regional Director

of ICA as special guest and speaker. Ms Savitri Singh, Advisor-Gender Programme and Communication represented ICA and made presentation on the topic “

Reaching Out

Dr.Chan Ho CHOI along with Mr.Rangan Dutta, Sr.Consultant of ICA-AP visited Japan in January-2012. He met with government officials and cooperative members in Tokyo in connection with the forthcoming 9th Cooperative Ministers Conference and research for the 4th Critical Study

on Co-operative Law and Policies.

Dr. CHOI also visited Kobe to see the venue and discuss arrangements for the Regional Assembly-2012 which will be held in Kobe in November-2012.

Glimpses of the Conference

The conference provided a very significant opportunity of conducting Bilateral Meetings. The cooperative ministers and leaders met to one another according to their interest. A special room was arranged for such meetings to take place.

A good number of media was present at the conference which gave wide coverage to the conference. They interviewed the Deputy Prime Minister of Thailand and other Ministers and delegates. A separate press meet room was arranged for media interaction.

Besides, there were quite a few side events were also organised to popularise the event and promote the local cooperatives to the conference delegates such as The Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives, Cooperative Promotion Department and Cooperative League of Thailand (CLT) has

put up big hoardings displaying information and photographs: A small exhibition and sale of cooperative products was also organised to promote sale and trade.

The Conference conclude on 29th February and on first March the participants went on study trip to Petchabury Province to see the cooperatives. The Director General of CPD, Mr.Somchai Charnnarongkul, other senior officers and Dr.Chan Ho CHOI, Regional Director of ICA-AP along with his staff accompanied the Ministers and other delegates to the cooperatives. The Participants visited to following co-operatives:

- Tayang Agricultural Cooperative Ltd.
- Co-operative Demonstration Center, Hubkramong Royal Project

