

CLAIR Singapore Newsletter Volume. 51 November 2010

Visit by CLAIR's Chairperson to Cambodia



- Cambodia's Secretary of State of the Ministry of Interior His Excellency Prum Sokha presenting a souvenir

CLAIR's newly-appointed Chairperson of the Board of Directors since April 2010, Mrs. Yoko Kimura, paid a visit to Cambodia from 29th June to 2nd July 2010. As one of CLAIR Singapore's counterparts, Cambodia has built a very close relationship with CLAIR Singapore through cooperation in a variety of projects and programs.

One of the main purposes of the visit was to review the progress of CLAIR's Local Authorities International Cooperation Promotion Project (Model Project), which was implemented in Kampong Chhnang Province and spearheaded by Tochigi Prefecture from 2007 to 2008 in the area of pottery-making. In addition, Mrs. Kimura also visited the 'Project to support the establishment of disaster prevention system in Cambodia', organized this year by the Kobe International Center for Cooperation and Communication. Lastly, Mrs. Kimura paid a courtesy call to Cambodia's Ministry of Interior, where a constructive exchange of ideas was held with His Excellency Prum Sokha, Secretary of State of the Ministry of Interior;

and His Excellency Leng Vy, Director-General of the General Department of Administration.

During the meeting, His Excellency Prum Sokha commented that "The projects that Cambodia has implemented together with CLAIR have been very rewarding and successful. Last year, through the support of CLAIR, a seminar entitled 'Japan-Cambodia Local Administration Seminar' was held in collaboration with Japan's Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, where we had the opportunity to learn more about Japan's local administration systems. As decentralization and deconcentration are increasingly gaining attention locally, the seminar was extremely useful and fruitful for Cambodia. We are greatly appreciative of CLAIR's efforts in contributing to the development of Cambodia, and sincerely wish to further strengthen our friendly relations with Japan." In response, Mrs. Kimura commented that she is hopeful towards Cambodia, and that "It is with great pleasure and comfort to see for myself how CLAIR's projects and activities have been of help to the country."



- Mrs. Kimura (front row, left) and His Excellency Touch Marim, the Governor of Kampong Chhnang Province (front row, right) listening to a progress report on the training program

JET Sending-off Reception

With aims to enhance the learning of foreign language in Japan, and to promote internationalization at the local level, CLAIR implements the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Programme in collaboration with Japanese local governments; the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications; the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology; and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Every year, approximately 20 Singaporeans are selected to participate in the JET Programme.

This year, a total of 24 Singaporeans, including 23 Assistant Language Teachers (ALT) and a Coordinator for International Relations (CIR) were selected to take part in the program. Prior to the participants' departure for Japan, a sending-off reception hosted by the Embassy of Japan in Singapore was held at The Japanese Association on 29th July 2010, providing an opportunity for current JET participants and attendees from Singapore's JET Alumni Association (JETAA) to further interact and build a supporting network for their hereafter stay in Japan. The event was also graced by Minister Hiroyuki Yamamoto, who offered words of encouragement to the participants.

As JET participants play an important role in enhancing the ties between Singapore and Japan, CLAIR will continue to provide its support



- JET participants giving a toast

to allow for the active involvement of JET participants in Japan, and looks forward to their future contribution towards bridging the relations between Singapore and the local regions they were posted to, or Japan as a whole.

Preservation of Intangible Cultural Assets in Phitsanulok, Thailand



- A group photo of Mr. Godengi (second row, center) with participants of the training program

Phitsanulok Municipality, a local authority in northern Thailand which is situated around 380 km from Bangkok, has a wealth of intangible cultural assets that are of distinctive preservation values. Realizing the necessity to preserve the unique local cultures for future generations, Phitsanulok Municipality has participated in CLAIR's Specialist Dispatch Project so as to learn about the methods and systems of preserving their intangible cultural assets.

Through the dispatch of Japanese government officials with specialized skills and knowledge to overseas local governments, CLAIR

implements the Specialist Dispatch Project with the aim of strengthening mutual cooperation between Japanese and overseas local governments, in addition to improving the administrative capacity of these overseas local governments.

Mr. Hiroki Godengi, an expert in the field of intangible cultural assets preservation was dispatched to Phitsanulok Municipality from 13th to 27th August 2010 to implement the relevant training program.

During the first half of the training program, the specialist participated in various local cultural events and visited the related cultural facilities in order to gain a deeper understanding of the traditional performing arts existing in Phitsanulok Municipality. Following this, he gave a series of lectures that featured the systems of cultural assets preservation in Japan and the successful case studies. Mr. Godengi also had a chance to visit Mahasarakram Province and Nongkhai Province with the trainees. During the visit, he and the trainees were able to experience Thai Northeastern culture such as local traditional dance etc.

The latter half of the training program was focused on building the capacity of the trainees to enable them to plan and implement programs to preserve the local distinctive cultural assets and promote awareness on cultural preservation. During the closing ceremony conducted on August 26th, Dr. Premruadee Charmpoonod, the Mayor of Phitsanulok Municipality commented that "I sincerely hope that through preserving both tangible and intangible cultural assets in Phitsanulok Municipality, we will be able to pass on our unique culture to the subsequent generations, and at the same time, leverage the local tourism industry to greater heights in the near future."

CLAIR Attends UCLG-ASPAC Executive Bureau Meeting

The United Cities and Local Governments, Asia Pacific Region (UCLG-ASPAC) conducted its Executive Bureau Meeting at Singapore's Suntec Convention Centre on 28th June 2010 with an agenda to discuss the various issues and future management of the organization. 61 members including staff from the secretariat attended the meeting and CLAIR attended as an international organization member.

At the meeting, Mr. Yasutomo Suzuki, Mayor of Hamamatsu City, presented an outline of the UCLG-ASPAC Congress 2010 to be held from 19th to 22nd October 2010 in Hamamatsu City.

Organized once every 2 to 3 years, this was the 3rd Congress since the previous one in Pattaya, Thailand in 2008; and also the first time the Congress was held in Japan.

The Congress saw the participation of approximately 300 representatives from local governments and related organizations of around 15 countries in the Asia Pacific region. Through various keynote speeches and plenary sessions, participants were able to share valuable information and discuss the common challenges facing local governments. The main theme for this Congress was "Responding to Globalization" with discussions centering on the 4 topics of "Multicultural Society", "Climate Change", "Tourism Promotion Through the Use of Local Resources" and "Inter-city Cooperation in the Economic Sector". In conjunction with the Congress, programs that offered a hands-on experience on Japanese culture and study tours to Hamamatsu City's industrial, environmental, historical and cultural sites were also conducted.



- Mr. Yasutomo Suzuki (standing), Mayor of Hamamatsu City, giving a presentation on the 3rd UCLG-ASPAC Congress to be held in the city in October 2010.

UCLG-ASPAC Congress 2010 website: <http://www.uclg-aspac2010.org>

Visit to the Department of Local Administration (DLA) in Thailand

Representatives from CLAIR Singapore visited the Department of Local Administration (DLA) under The Ministry of Interior in Thailand on 19th August 2010, with an aim to further enhance the cooperative ties between both organizations. DLA is CLAIR's official counterpart for its programs and activities in Thailand, and the two organizations have enjoyed many years of constructive relations.

Mr. Jarin Chakkaphark, Deputy Director-General of DLA who greeted representatives from CLAIR Singapore, commented that "CLAIR's programs such as The Local Government Exchange and Cooperation Seminar enabled participants to attain invaluable knowledge and experiences which would be useful upon their return to their respective home countries. Japan and Thailand share similar cultural values such as respect for the elderly, and as a result, the seminar is a meaningful platform for Thai participants to gain new knowledge."

CLAIR's Local Government Exchange and Cooperation Seminar for year 2010 was implemented in Japan's Shizuoka Prefecture with 'Disaster Prevention' as its theme. With regard to this year's seminar, Mr. Chakkaphark commented that "Since the tsunami hit Thailand in 2004, people have acquired a higher level of awareness on disaster management, and the seminar would provide a great opportunity for the Thai participant to learn from the Japanese experience in terms of disaster prevention and management."

It is hoped that CLAIR's cooperative relations with the Department of Local Administration and Ministry of Interior in Thailand could be leveraged to greater heights in the future through CLAIR's programs such as Specialist Dispatch Project and Local Authorities International Cooperation Promotions Project (Model Project).



• Mr. Yutaka Oinuma, Director of CLAIR Singapore (left) exchanging views with Mr. Jarin Chakkaphark (right) on CLAIR's programs

Lecture on Japanese Local Autonomy System at Chiang Mai University, Thailand

On 16th August 2010, Mr. Yutaka Oinuma, the Director of CLAIR Singapore delivered a lecture on the Japanese local autonomy system at Chiang Mai University in Thailand. The lecture was conducted on the request of the Consulate-General of Japan in Chiang Mai, and was attended by around 190 participants that included students from Chiang Mai University, staff from Bank of Thailand's Northern Region Office, and also representatives from the media.

In his lecture, Mr. Oinuma provided insights to the characteristics of Japanese local autonomy system, for example Japan adopts a two-tier system of prefectures and municipalities, and local governments in Japan are regarded as independent incorporated entities whereby their chief executives are directly elected by the people. In addition, explanations on local public finance and decentralization reforms in Japan were also made during the lecture.

During the question and answer session, participants actively exchanged their opinions on the topic and asked questions related to local allocation tax, local bonds, qualities of a local chief executive, and also relations between the executive and legislative branches in a typical Japanese local government.



• Mr. Oinuma (on stage, right) delivering his lecture on Japanese local autonomy system

Fukuoka Prize 2010 Press Conference for Arts and Culture Prize Laureate

Fukuoka City awarded Singapore's theatre director, Mr. Ong Keng Sen, the Arts and Culture Prize of the Fukuoka Prize 2010 in a press conference held in Singapore on 30th July 2010. CLAIR Singapore supported the overall preparations for this event by providing relevant local information, liaising with the various concerned parties as well as assisting in the program's proceedings on that day.

The Fukuoka Prize was established by Fukuoka City and the Yokatopia Foundation in 1990 to honor individuals or groups for their outstanding achievements in creating and preserving the unique and diverse cultures of Asia, in particular, in the regions of East Asia, Southeast Asia and South Asia. Every year, winners are selected and awarded in 3 prize categories: the Grand Prize, the Academic Prize and the Arts and Culture Prize.

Among the approximately 50 guests that attended the press conference were Mr. Chan Yeng Kit, permanent secretary for Singapore's Ministry of Information, Communications and the Arts; Mr. Makoto Yamanaka, then Ambassador of Japan to Singapore; past laureates of the Fukuoka Prize from Singapore, local artists as well as members of the theatre and media.

Mr. Ong began his career as an artistic director in 1988 when he founded the theatrical company "TheatreWorks". Since then, he has put up a great variety of plays throughout major theatres in Asia, Europe and the United States. He was also the recipient of the Singapore Cultural Medallion Award in 2003.

In his acceptance speech for the Arts and Culture Prize, Mr. Ong mentioned that the hybrid Asian character in him enables him to embrace multiple cultures and contributes to the variety of Asian perspectives in his works. The various aspects of Singapore such as its multiethnic composition, distinct political system and short history have also become the



• The Arts and Culture Prize laureate Mr. Ong Keng Sen (left) receiving the letter of notice of award from Mr. Shinji Nakagawa, Secretary General of the Secretariat of the Fukuoka Prize Committee.

motivating forces behind his creativity. He earnestly hopes that his works will help stimulate learning, thinking and a sense of inquisitiveness among his audience, as well as contribute to increasing communication among people in different parts of the world.

The award ceremony of the Fukuoka Prize 2010 and Mr. Ong's seminar on "Step Across the Border – Ong Keng Sen's challenge to a new frontier" were both successfully held in Fukuoka City on 16th and 18th September respectively.

Fukuoka Prize official website: <http://www.asianmonth.com/prize/>

New Staff



Gueh Yuyuan

As a graduate from Japanese studies, I am very fortunate to have been given various opportunities to participate in several international exchange programs; where I not only got to study and immerse myself in the cultures of Japan, but also interact with counterparts from around the world who share the same interest in Japan as I do. Through these experiences, I have come to realize the importance and value of maintaining relations between countries and have since aspired to pursue a similar track in my career path. As such, I feel deeply honored to be able to join CLAIR Singapore, and to be part of a group that looks upon itself to promote and maintain international activities and friendly relations between the local authorities of Japan and ASEAN region as well as India. At the same time, using the knowledge that I have thus learnt, I sincerely hope that I will be able to contribute to the operations of CLAIR Singapore and help further improve future mutual cooperations and relations between Japan and ASEAN countries, and between Japan and India.

A Thank-You Message from CLAIR Singapore

As CLAIR Singapore celebrates its 20th anniversary this year, we would like to take this opportunity to express our greatest appreciation to all individuals and organizations that have rendered us your warmest support over the years. We sincerely hope that you will continue to lend CLAIR Singapore your kindest understanding and cooperation for the years to come.

Thank you very much.

About CLAIR

CLAIR is a joint organization founded in 1988 by 47 prefectures and 19 major cities in Japan in order to assist Japanese local authorities with the implementation of their international exchange policies. With its headquarters in Tokyo, CLAIR has seven overseas offices in New York, London, Paris, Singapore, Seoul, Sydney, and Beijing.

CLAIR SINGAPORE office was set up in October 1990. It supports and promotes international activities and friendly relations between local authorities in Japan and their counterparts in Singapore and the ASEAN countries as well as India.

For further information on our activities, please contact CLAIR Singapore office.

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