



ASSA News

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INDONESIA MEET TACKLES REFORMS

Talks on pension reforms and stronger social security ties highlighted the 5th Board Meeting of the ASEAN Social Security Association (ASSA), a pan-Asia organization of eight social security organizations from six member nations in the region, in Bali, Indonesia on April 24-26, 2000.



ASSA Chairman and Philippine Social Security System (SSS) President Carlos A. Arellano said the proposed reforms of the World Bank, particularly the privatization of public pension funds and the engagement of outside fund managers, should be given in-depth attention and analyses.

“The Association is determined to take the necessary courses of action to ensure that the pension fund reforms proposed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank would be in consonance with the group’s vision of social protection—that is being attuned to the social realities of the times,” Arellano said.

The ASSA Chairman explained that as the proposed reform is considered by the ASSA as a significant social security issue, the International Social Security Association (ISSA) and the International Labour Organization should be consulted for better understanding and implementation.

“Corollary to its proposed reforms, the IMF and the World Bank should also consider both the financial and social aspects of social security,” Arellano stated. “We should also see and learn from Singapore and Malaysia, which have been successful in their respective social security (mandatory provident fund set-up) programs.”

In a position paper submitted to the ASSA, the Central Provident Fund Board (CPF) of Singapore stated that the approach a pension fund adopts should depend on the differences in starting positions, national preferences, scope of investment alternatives and the maturity of the financial and regulatory infrastructure in which the pension fund operates. The CPF Board added that once the country or institution have considered the various options in managing its pension funds, it should then find an approach that is best suited to its situation.

The Employees’ Provident Fund (EPF) of Malaysia reiterated these view that each country must have its own way and style in designing its social security

schemes as it is best suited to meet its needs.

With regard to the issue of privatizing the investment functions of public pension funds, the EPF noted that the objective of fund managers is to make profits, while the objective of public pension institutions is to provide better benefits to its members for old age protection. Thus, fund managers, generally, have a shorter-term investment horizon as compared to public pension institutions. It also added that privatization may not necessarily work in Malaysia since part of its pension fund is already privately managed. Therefore, the performance of the private fund managers may not be any better than that of the EPF.

The Government Service Insurance System (GSIS) of the Philippines, for its part, agreed in principle, to the hiring of

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From the Chairman's Desk

By articulating our apprehensions on specific issues and problems faced by each member-nation, we were able to analyze, strategize, and make the necessary recommendations for effective execution of our respective social security protection schemes. This exercise proved to be a most enriching experience for all of us.

It was also a significant step for the ASSA to venture into the highly creative mode of information dissemination through the creation of our very own ASSA Home Page in the world-wide-accessed Internet. As the world turns into a global village, it is inevitable to ply the information highway with such technology.

Finally, we were able to put to test our sincerity to become one solid voice as we arrived at a unified position regarding the IMF-World Bank Proposals of allowing private fund

managers to handle public funds. This action is imperative in order to strengthen our pension fund position in the ASEAN region if we are to be effective, creative, and responsible stewards of the money of our people.

We have only begun to realize how extensive the impact of social security is on the lives of millions of its members and their families. So we can only imagine the powerful effect a formidable, unified body such as the ASSA can have on this corner of the world.

Together, we can take our respective countries into great strides with specific, well thought out programs and policies meant to advance our agenda and to better protect the workers and their families from want and financial insecurity. Then in the end, we would have made this world a better place to live in.

The most recent meeting of the ASEAN Social Security Association (ASSA) held in Bali, Indonesia has greatly strengthened the association's commitment to bring important breakthroughs that can pave the way for growth and development in each of the countries represented.

Now more than ever, we are confident that we can face up to the challenges of the 21st century by providing a dynamic, proactive and potent leadership for the peoples of Southeast Asia particularly with regard to a progressive and sustainable social security protection in this region.

Indonesia Meet...

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the outside fund managers to manage a portion of its investments portfolio. According to the GSIS, however, there are some questions and issues that need to be addressed regarding the criteria and process for selection, accreditation, and performance benchmarks of these fund managers.

During the said board meeting, the members of the ASSA were unanimous that the question on whether or not to adopt the IMF/World Bank proposal, especially on the use of private fund managers, should be left to the individual country to decide since each country has its own peculiarity.

The ASSA members also expressed hope that this year, the group will have

its homepage in the web. The ASSA Chairman explained that this would allow more people to be aware of the Association's programs and activities on social security in the ASEAN region. The CPF Board is set to develop this homepage.

The board meeting was hosted by the Indonesian National Social Security Association and was attended by thirty-four representatives from Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam. Observers from Brunei and the International Social Security Association were also present.

The next board meeting of the Association will be hosted by the CPF Board in Singapore in August of this year.



ASSA News

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PROFILE OF AN ASSA MEMBER:

TAN SRI SALLEHUDDIN BIN MOHAMED *Executive Chairman* *Employees Provident Fund, Malaysia*

Tan Sri Dato' Paduka Sallehuddin bin Mohamed was initially appointed as a Non-Executive Chairman of the Employees Provident Fund (EPF) Board, Malaysia on May 26, 1990 by the Minister of Finance. Subsequently appointed as the Executive Chairman of the EPF Board on June 1, 1991 after the EPF Act 1991 was amended to provide for such an appointment, he is, in this capacity, both the Chairman of the EPF Board as well as the Chief Executive Officer.

As Chairman of the EPF Board, he is responsible for the Board's overall function in the formulation of policies and guidelines and ensuring their implementation. As the Chief Executive Officer, he is entrusted with the day-to-day administration and management of the affairs of the Board.

Prior to his appointment with the EPF, he had an illustrious career in the Civil Service of Malaysia, which he first joined in 1959. From then he held many important positions in the Ministry of Finance including the Head of the Tax Policy Division, Director of Budget, and Deputy Secretary-General of the Ministry of Finance. He also served in the Economic Planning Unit of the Prime Minister's Department as its Director-General. His final position before retirement in February 1990 from the civil service was as Chief Secretary to the Government of Malaysia. In this capacity, he was the head of the Civil Service as well as Secretary to the Cabinet.

During his tenure with the government, Tan Sri Sallehuddin also held key positions in public corporations and government agencies. Some of these key positions included the Chairmanship of the National Electricity Board, the Industrial Bank of Malaysia Ltd., Kewangan Industri Berhad, Malaysia Export Credit Insurance Berhad, MARA

Institute of Technology Council, and the National Science Council. He also serves as Chairman of several public listed companies in which the Employees Provident Fund has interests.

Despite his numerous positions with the Government and the private sector, Tan Sri Sallehuddin has always been actively involved in the field of



"... in order for ASSA to become a vibrant, dynamic and respected association in the region, it is important that member institutions continue to work hard to bring about greater cooperation among member countries."

education and higher learning. He is at present the Chairman of the Board of the University of Technology, Malaysia and the Chairman of the Sultan Iskandar Institute of Urban Habitat and Highrise, University of Technology, Malaysia.

The EPF Chairman graduated in Economics with honors from the University of Malay in 1959. He also attended numerous courses including the Certificate in International Tax and Advanced Management Programme from Harvard Law School and Harvard Business School, respectively.

In recognition of his remarkable contributions to the Administrative and Diplomatic Service, he was honored both internationally and locally. In 1982, His Majesty the King of Malaysia bestowed him the title "Tan Sri" and in 1986, he was awarded the Honorary Grand Cross of the Federal Republic of Germany. In 1997, the University of Technology Malaysia awarded Tan Sri Sallehuddin the Honorary Doctorate in Management.

Tan Sri Sallehuddin, as one of the founding members of ASSA, is confident

that ASSA would play a significant role in the development of social security protection in the region. It is his vision that ASSA would become a vibrant, dynamic and respected association in the region.

According to the EPF Chairman, in order for ASSA to achieve this, it is important that member institutions

continue to work hard to bring about greater cooperation among member countries. He is gratified to note that ASSA, which has been in existence for nearly three years, had already managed to bring member institutions together

and provide them the platform to exchange views, information and experiences. He also recognizes that the active participation and enthusiasm portrayed shows the commitment of member institutions and their seriousness in the furtherance of the objectives of the ASSA. It is his fervent hope that ASSA can serve as an effective regional forum to plan and provide better benefits to the members of the various member institutions. Through this regional cooperation, Tan Sri Sallehuddin believes that ASSA is well on its way to achieving its objectives of promoting the development of social security in the region.

Tan Sri Sallehuddin envisages that the EPF, Malaysia will grow to become an integral part in the lives of all the workers in that country through its provision of old age protection. However, his immediate concern is to improve the existing benefits to members and further improve the operational efficiency and effectiveness of the institution.

PROFILE OF AN ASSA MEMBER INSTITUTION

GOVERNMENT SERVICE INSURANCE SYSTEM PHILIPPINES

The Government Service Insurance System (GSIS) was created by Commonwealth Act No. 186 with two basic purposes: to promote the efficiency and welfare of the employees of the Government of the Philippines; and to replace the Constabulary, Health and Teachers Pension System. It was also entrusted with the administration of the General Insurance Fund and tasked to provide insurance protection to assets and properties, which have government insurable assets.

Corporate Vision and Mission

The GSIS envisions a progressive Philippines whose public servants are secure and proud with adequate benefits and responsive service.

The GSIS aims to provide adequate benefits and responsive services to all members and dependents, comprehensive protection to government insurable interests and maximum contribution to nation building. The GSIS undertakes all these in an environment where inspired leadership and dedicated employees promote highest quality services to its members and clients.

Coverage

The GSIS compulsorily covers all government workers irrespective of their employment status, except the following:

- Employees who have separate retirement schemes under special laws and are therefore covered by their respective retirement laws, to include the members of the Judiciary, Constitutional Commissions and other similarly situated government officials;

- Contractual employees who have no employer-employee relationship with the agencies they serve;

- Uniformed members of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and the Philippine National Police (PNP), including the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology (BJMP) and the Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP).

Social Security Benefits

Life Insurance

All GSIS members are covered by a compulsory life insurance, the benefits of which are as follows: maturity, cash surrender value, death, accidental death, permanent disability, sickness income to include free accidental and death insurance of 10,000 pesos.

The GSIS also provides supplemental insurance to government workers as well as special insurance benefits to Baranggay and Sanggunian Bayan members such as death, funeral, and total permanent disability benefits.

Retirement

There are four retirement schemes that are available to members: for

members employed before May 31, 1977 - RA 660 and RA 1616; and for those employed after the said date – PD 1146 and RA 8291. Depending on the scheme applicable, the retirement benefits include five-year lump sum payments and pension.

Administrative Organization

The governing and policy-making body of the GSIS is the Board of Trustees whose members are appointed by the President of the Philippines. To date, there are 27 GSIS branches and 106 satellite offices nationwide. In the



GSIS Headquarters Financial Center

years ahead, the System's service network will continue to increase as the institution is committed to establish branch offices in every province of the country where there exists a minimum of 15,000 active members. This is in addition to the continued setting up of service desks in areas where they are most needed.

PROFILE OF AN ASSA OBSERVER INSTITUTION

SOCIAL SECURITY ORGANIZATION LAOS

The Social Security Department of the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare of Laos announced that the Social Security Scheme for employees would be implemented in July 2000 following the signing of Decree No. 207/PM which was held on December 23, 1999. Currently, the members of the Board of Directors are being assigned. Once in place, the Social Security Organization of Laos will be created.

The following is an overview of the Social Security Scheme for employees as stipulated in Decree No. 207/PM.

Principles

The social security system for employees is based on the principles of social insurance: compulsory insurance, contributory rights, self-financing and self-government under state guarantee.

Coverage

The decree concerns all workers employed under the Labor Law in state owned enterprises, joint enterprises and the private sector.

The social security system is to be built up gradually, starting with compulsory insurance for all workers in enterprises with 10 or more employees and their branch offices in Vientiane Municipality. Gradually, compulsory insurance will be extended to the rest of the country. Smaller employers can join the social security system on voluntary basis.

The Social Security Organization

The Social Security Organization will be created to manage the social

security system for employees. It will be an autonomous public body under the supervision of the Minister of Labor and Social Welfare.

The Social Security Organization will be governed by a Board of Directors. The Board will be composed of representatives from employers, workers and the Government. This will allow the members (workers and employers) to control their own scheme. The Government is included in the Board as it guarantees the long-term obligation of the Social Security Organization.

Contributions

The contributions are computed based on a percentage of the total earnings of the insured worker. Such percentage will be determined by the Board of Directors. The contribution will be paid by the employer and the worker with the worker's share not exceeding half of the total contribution. The employer will pay the full contribution for the coverage in case of employment injury.

Benefits

1) Health care benefits

The Social Security Organization will provide health care coverage for the insured worker and the family (spouse and children).

The coverage will be organized on capitation basis. The health care providers will be paid for a defined list of services on a per capita basis. The covered person will not have to pay for services rendered by the selected provider if such services are covered under the capitation agreement and

provided by the selected provider.

2) Short term benefits

Short-term benefits are paid when interruption of work is expected for a relatively short period. These include sickness and maternity benefits.

A birth grant is payable to the insured mother or the dependent spouse of the insured worker at the time of confinement.

A death grant is payable to the relatives of the deceased insured member who takes care of the funeral.

3) Employment injury benefits

Insured workers are entitled to employment injury benefits, without any qualifying period, in case of work-related accidents or occupational diseases.

The scheme covers medical care, temporary and permanent disability, carers, funeral and survivor's benefits.

4) Pensions

Pensions are lifelong, monthly payments in case of old age, invalidity or death of the breadwinner.

For old age, the standard retirement age is 60 years.

Invalidity pension is payable to the insured worker who, because of bad health, is unable to continue working. At age 60, the invalidity pension will be replaced by an old age pension of the same amount.

In case the insured worker or the pensioner dies, the surviving members of the family are entitled to a survivor's benefit.

EPF Social Security Training Institute (ESSET) Transferring to Bangi Complex

The EPF Social Security Training Institute (ESSET) of Malaysia, the center for growth and excellence in social security training and development is moving to its new Bangi complex



View of the ESSET Complex while under construction

in September 2000. The opening ceremony has been confirmed on October 2, 2000, which also coincides with the 49th Anniversary of the Employees Provident Fund on October 1, 2000. This historic event will be a turning point for ESSET and will mark the beginning of its acceleration to the fullest of its potential in the years ahead.

Looking back, ESSET started its

humble beginnings with the setting up of the Training and Career Development Division in January 1984. The intensification of operation and activities and the need to equip the staff with more knowledge and skill has led the management to be more aggressive in the provision of training facilities and thus led to the establishment of a training institute in 1995. It later became known as the EPF Social Security Training Institute.

ESSET has set itself with the objective of becoming the leading center of excellence in training and research in Social Security in the Asia Pacific Region. To date, ESSET has organized training courses for the EPF staff, and social security and investment institutions from Malaysia and abroad. Among its alumni are 61 participants from 11 countries in the Asia Pacific and Africa who attended the Social Security course, which is now held twice a year.

Operating in the new complex, ESSET is now making final arrangements with the International Labour Organization (ILO) to conduct a course on Social Protection Financing

from November 13-18, 2000. This actuary-based course has a final examination which participants have to pass in order to be granted the course certificate.

In terms of future plans, ESSET intends to set up a fully equipped resource center, as well as a research unit to support and facilitate the training needs and development of the various training



Scenic view of ESSET

courses for the current times and future. With all the dynamic changes and more in progress, ESSET is confident to be preparing for the various needs for training and development in order to meet the challenges of the 21st century.

ISO 9000 Quality Improvement Program

The Malaysian Modernization and planning Unit of the Prime Minister's Department recognized the Employees Provident Fund (EPF), Malaysia for its commitment towards service quality improvements.

With this recognition the EPF joins the ranks of other public service organizations having the MS ISO 9000 certification. The Deputy Prime Minister Malaysia presented the MS ISO 9000 certification to the EPF at the prestigious Prime Ministers' Quality Award presentation ceremony held on April 13, 1999.

The EPF was awarded the MS ISO 9000 following its successful documentation and implementation of the MS ISO 9002 in respect of the Employers Services functions namely; Employers Registration, Cancellation of Employers Liability, Management of Employers Accounts and Enforcement of Non-Compliant Employers.

This marks another milestone in the Service Quality improvement program of the Employees Provident Fund, Malaysia.

EPF Introduces New Benefit Schemes to Members

Members of the Employees Provident Fund (EPF), Malaysia will be able to withdraw their savings under four new withdrawal schemes introduced in the year 2000.

The new withdrawal schemes are:

1) Member's Children Education Withdrawal Scheme

EPF members can withdraw part of their savings from their EPF Account II to pay for the education fee of their children pursuing degree and postgraduate degree courses at higher learning institutions within the country and abroad. The withdrawal regulation provides that members can withdraw once a year for each child subject to the availability of fund in Account II which comprises 30 percent of members total contributions.

2) Personal Computer Withdrawal Scheme

EPF members with children aged 10 and above and who are still schooling will be allowed to withdraw their savings from EPF Account II to purchase a personal computer. Under this scheme, the regulations provide that members can withdraw up to a maximum of 5000.00 RM 3 to buy a personal computer

3) Pensionable Employees Withdrawal Scheme

Public service employees who have been emplaced in the Public Services Pension Scheme can now withdraw their EPF Savings without having to wait until they retire at age 55 as they are required to do now. Under this new scheme, they can withdraw their share of the savings soon after they are emplaced in the Public Services Pension Scheme. The Government's share of contributions will be transferred to the Pension trust Fund.

4) EPF Annuity Schemes

EPF members can use all their savings to purchase a life annuity from approved insurance companies. Members have the option to purchase either a *Conventional Annuity* or an *Islamic Takaful Annuity*. Members between 55 years and 70 years old can purchase an *Immediate Annuity* while members who are below the age of 55 years can purchase a *Deferred Annuity*. The schemes will enable members to have a stream of income (annuity payment) in their retirement.

SSS and SSO Discuss Social Security Issues

A 47-member delegation from Thailand's Social Security Office (SSO) arrived on June 19, 2000 for talks with Philippine Social Security System (SSS) officials on issues affecting their respective countries' institutions.

The delegation, headed by SSO Chief of Inspector Generals Padungsak Thephasdin Ayuthaya, held an open forum discussion with their Filipino counterparts following a briefing on SSS investments policy, contribution collection, benefit payments, and use of new technology and electronic services.

"The visit not only gave us the opportunity to showcase SSS achievement, it will also lead to stronger ties between the two countries," SSS Chairman and President Carlos A. Arellano said.

The SSS, which has more than 21 million members, including overseas Filipino workers in different countries in the world, manages the biggest pension fund in the country. It is the number one government agency in terms of performance and public acceptance.



SSS Chairman and President Carlos Arellano meets with SSO Thailand's Chief of Inspector Generals Padungsak Thephasdin Ayuthaya and other SSO officials.

Arellano, who is also the Chairman of the ASSA, said the visit would benefit social security members in both countries.

"We acquire knowledge in the exchange of ideas," Arellano said. "It would definitely improve the state of social security in Asia.

During the visit, the delegation toured the SSS ID Center in Quezon City, a modern ID production facility that produces machine-readable and tamper-proof identification cards for its members.

SSS Opens P3 Billion Housing Loan Facility for OFWs, Trade Unions



President Joseph Estrada of the Philippines looks on as SSS Chairman and President Carlos Arellano and Employees' Confederation of the Philippines President Donald Dee signs a memorandum of agreement on the direct housing loan program. Also in picture are (from left) OWWA Administrator Eleuterio Gardener, HUDCC Chair Lenny de Jesus and DOLE Secretary Bienvenido Laguesma.

The Social Security System (SSS) of the Philippines recently announced the opening of a 3 billion pesos direct housing loan facility that would directly benefit an estimated 5.5 million overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) and about one million trade union members.

SSS Chairman and President Carlos A. Arellano said the loan program is in consonance with the government's Labor Day non-wage benefit packages, which

President Estrada announced in Malacañang on May 1, 2000.

The 3 billion loan window is part of the government's commitment to help provide affordable housing facilities to low and middle-income earners, particularly the OFWs and trade union members.

Under the loan window, OFWs and trade union members can qualify for loans of up to 180,000 pesos under the socialized housing scheme. For low-cost housing, these groups can avail loans ranging from 180,000 to 500,000 pesos. Socialized housing loans carry an interest rate of nine per cent per annum while low-cost housing loans have a 13 per cent interest rate.

A memorandum of agreement on the lending program was signed by the SSS and other government agencies such as the Department of Labor and Employment, Overseas Workers Welfare Administration, Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council, Home Insurance Guarantee Corporation

and the Employers Confederation of the Philippines.

These agencies are now jointly drawing-up the implementing guidelines of the program.

"The program will undoubtedly help the government succeed in its centerpiece program which is providing shelter to a great number of our countrymen. The SSS, along this line, is committed to serve the best interest of the country by supporting the pro-people program of President Estrada," Arellano said.

Earlier, the SSS committed a total of 6 billion pesos in credit and financing to the Multi-Window Lending System to help the government in its housing program. Last December 1999, it helped finance the construction of 10,000 low-cost homes in what is to be known as Erap City, a 201-hectare urban community for low and middle-income earners in Montalban, Rizal.

GSIS Pabahay Loan Restructuring Program

The Government Service Insurance System (GSIS) of the Philippines launched the GSIS Pabahay Loan Restructuring Program (PLRP) on May 31, 2000.

GSIS President and General Manager Federico Pascual said the state pension fund came out with the PLRP, a liberal loan restructuring program, to improve its collection performance as well as lessen the burden on its member-borrowers.

With the new restructuring program, GSIS members who have past due housing loans can avail of an extended time for payment of 10 to 15 years without paying any required downpayment or penalties.

Mr. Pascual said this is very liberal compared with the fund's past set-up which required borrowers to pay a 30 percent downpayment of their existing balance before their loans can be

restructured for about three to five years.

Mr. Pascual explained that this program will be on a cash-flow basis. "Our target is to have a cash-flow strategy. Even if you get only little payment for principal but you get continuously paid for interest, you create cash flow," he said.

He added that in the fifteenth year, the borrower could then pay the remaining principal. If the borrower still cannot pay, the borrower has the option to sell the property to pay for the remaining loan and still have enough money to acquire another property since the property becomes high-value by then.

This year, GSIS has already allotted 6 billion pesos for its housing loan program, which it has already committed to the multi-window lending system, the government's new housing program.

SSS Rated Number One Agency

The Philippine Social Security System (SSS) held on to the top position as the number one government agency in terms of performance and public acceptance, according to the latest survey conducted by Pulse Asia.

In its *Ulat sa Bayan* (country report) for the period covering March 15-29, Pulse Asia said the SSS garnered a net approval rating of +67 from a survey of 1,200 respondents polled nationwide.

“It is our goal to reach out to our people, especially the poor, with good quality service,” said SSS Chairman and President Carlos A. Arellano. “It is one of the primary goals of the Estrada administration.”

In three surveys last year, the SSS topped the list of agencies with the highest performance ratings. The surveys covered such issues as the quality of life, the people’s sense of domestic and international security concerns, and how the government and its agencies respond to these concerns.

Arellano said the approval rating serves as an inspiration and challenge to the institution to seek more improvements in its services to its growing membership.

The SSS also continues to show extraordinary performance in investments. Total assets grew to 177 billion pesos from 158 billion pesos in 1998.

CPF Launches “Going Beyond Customers’



The Central Provident Fund Board (CPF) of Singapore has always placed great emphasis on improving its customer service. Over the last 10 years, it has set up a one-stop customer service center (1995), self-service multimedia machines (1996), Internet homepage (1997) and a centralized telephone enquiry service (1998). This year, the CPF launched the “Going Beyond Customer’s Expectations” plan with the hope to not just maintain the momentum in giving excellent service to its customers, but to further exceed their expectations.

In today’s world of constant change and increasing customer expectations, the service blueprint provides a set of guiding principles for CPF staff to rely on when designing new services or interacting with customers. Among the principles are “Exceed Expectations”, where customers are offered alternatives without them having to ask; “Think Customer Convenience”, where services are delivered on time, every time; and “Empower Customers”, which aims to offer transparency and provide customers the rationale of the services of the CPF.

With these principles, the CPF Board hopes that every CPF officer will be a CPF and Public Service Ambassador striving to exceed customers’ expectations!

The CPF Learning Journey - A People’s Savings, A Nation’s Future

The Central Provident Fund Board (CPF) of Singapore recently opened “The CPF Learning Journey - A People’s Savings, A Nation’s Future”. The interactive and multimedia gallery



was developed to give students, foreign visitors and staff an insight into the role of the CPF in nation building, especially the importance of the CPF in helping the members meet their needs for retirement, home ownership and medical care.

The gallery was officially launched by Mr. Lim Han Soon, CPF General Manager, on February 2, 2000. It is located at the CPF’s Bishan Branch Office, thus it has been affectionately called the Bishan Gallery. The high-tech display not only takes visitors through



the Board’s development from its humble beginnings in the 1950’s to where it is today, but also delivers the Board’s vision for the new millennium.

SSO Meets ISSA



Mr. Rungarit Chantararat, Secretary General of the Social Security Office of Thailand (second from left) met with Mr. Johan Verstraeten, President of the International Social Security Association (third from left) during the 79th Meeting of the Bureau in Geneva, Switzerland on April 6-7, 2000. The meeting fostered positive signs of closer cooperation. The two organization heads committed to meet each other again at the 12th Regional Conference, which will be held in Bangkok in November 2000.

Improvements in Vietnam Social Security Benefits

In its commitment to the economic and social development of the country, the Vietnamese government has promulgated Decree No. 175/1999/ND-CP, which stipulates increases in the minimum wage, social security benefits, and subsistence allowances.

Since January 1, 2000, retirement pensioners and other recipients of benefits stipulated in Government Decree No. 06/CP dated January 21, 1997 have been enjoying a 25 percent increase in their monthly pensions and allowances. These include invalidity benefits, special allowances for workers in the rubber industry, sickness and maternity benefits, allowances for eligible local officials, and survivors' allowances.

In addition to this, a surplus of

VND 25,000 has been added to the monthly allowance of pensioners who retired before September 1, 1985.

The Vietnam Social Security (VSS) promulgated Circular No. 185/BHXH-CDCS of January 31, 2000, which provides the guidelines for VSS' provincial branches in the readjustment of retirement pensions and other benefits and allowances.

According to the Vietnamese Government perspective plan, the benefits will be further increased by 12 percent by the year 2001. This is in line with government's program to compensate for the impact of the inflation in the country and to improve the living conditions of the workers.

SSO Conducts Unemployment Insurance Feasibility Study

The Social Security Office (SSO) of Thailand is conducting an unemployment insurance feasibility study which aims to look into in the crisis of economic downturn in the country and how to be able to assist the unemployed. The study, which was started in 1998, is being conducted with the technical assistance of the International Labour Organization

According to the Social Security Act 1990, the SSO has to implement the Unemployment Insurance program for covered workers. However, as the number of unemployed persons in the country is increasing, the SSO and the Government of Thailand realized the difficulty of implementing this program. Therefore, an Unemployment Insurance Preparatory Committee was established to conduct an in-depth study and analysis to determine the best way to launch the scheme. This committee is composed of senior executives from the Department of Employment Services, Department of Skills Development, Department of Public Welfare, Department of Labour Protection and Welfare and the SSO. Currently, the committee is in the process of gathering information and studying related literature as well as experiences of other countries. The date of implementation of the unemployment scheme is yet to be finalized.

ETF Holds Presentation of Employees Certificates



The Honorable Pehin Orang Kaya Digadong Seri Lela Dato Seri Paduka Haji Awang Hussain, Chairman of the Employees Trust Fund (ETF) of Brunei Darussalam giving his welcoming remarks at the presentation of Employees Registration Certificates on March 15, 2000

... and Wins Best Counter Service Award



The Assistant Branch Manager and staff display the Civil Service Institute Award for Best Counter Service in the Tutong District on May 13, 2000

Study Program on SSS Offered to Asian Countries

The Social Security System (SSS) of the Philippines is offering a study program on its policies and operations to its counterparts in the region.

SSS Chairman and President Carlos A. Arellano said the program, which involves short courses on the country's social security policies and pension fund administration, would help strengthen cooperation among pension fund institutions in the region.

"The SSS is willing to impart its knowledge to fellow implementors of social security in the region," Arellano said. "It is a major step to unify pension fund institutions in South east Asia."

The study program was one of the topics raised during a meeting between SSS officials and a 47-member delegation from the Social Security Office of Thailand, which visited the institution on June 19, 2000.

The subjects to be covered in the program would include SSS history and its current programs, but other subjects would be introduced based on request from interested countries.

"We believe that a lot could be achieved through unity and cooperation. Education through dialogues and discussions is an essential step to achieving that goal," Arellano said.

SSO to Extend Coverage to Smaller Enterprises

The Minister of Labour and Social Welfare approved the proposal of the Social Security Office (SSO) of Thailand to extend its coverage to workers in enterprises with one to nine employees. Starting April 1, 2001, these employees will be provided benefits for both work-related and non-work related incidents.

Currently, the 10-year old social insurance scheme only covers workers in enterprises with 10 or more employees, and offers benefits for sickness and injury,

disability and death which are not caused by work-related accidents, maternity, child allowance and old-age pension.

The number of insured workers as of February 2000 is 5.99 million in about 100,000 enterprises in the whole Kingdom. It is estimated that, after the enforcement of this coverage extension, the number of insured persons will increase to 9.4 million or 28 percent of the total labour force (33 million).

CPF Celebrates 45th Anniversary

The Central Provident Board (CPF) of Singapore celebrates its 45th Anniversary in the year 2000 with the slogan "Take Charge. Plan Early. Secure Your Retirement." The slogan has been chosen to highlight the importance of early

retirement planning to its members. A number of activities have been planned to mark the anniversary, such as public education on planning early for retirement and corporate citizenship projects.

FROM THE ALBUM

5th Board Meeting of the ASEAN Social Security Association



A Glimpse of Balinese Culture

