

Labour Problems in Southeast Asia

Labour Movements in Bangkok, Thailand: Challenges and Responses.

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Background and Objectives

The purpose of the 7 day-fieldwork in Thailand (March 5 to 12, 2009) is to gather recent development on labour union's activities and strategies in Bangkok. For that, I have met and interviewed some key-informants for updated information on the current state of Thai labour movement. Besides, I also gathered union's publications, including magazines and posters they produced. This is to observe how the unions have developed strategies in coping with the economic downturn and providing answers in defending their members' interests.

During the time of fieldwork, luckily there were two important events for the labour movement which I participated in. The first one was the rally of women workers on March 8 to commemorate the International Women Day. This event provided a window to see the real condition of Thai labour movement and how the workers are organized. The second was the Asian Labour Conference in Bangkok organized by AMRC- Hong Kong. This conference gathered union leaders from respective countries across Asia to sit, share and learn together from each others' experiences. As the labour movements are now challenged by the global forces, it is realized that unions must act fast to maintain workers' democratic control over how the economy should be structured. Both events can be regarded as part of union's responses to the global forces. In this way, the fieldwork has been fruitful to capture the moments and to provide basic understanding for deeper research on how the labour movement has been advancing ways to reach equality and justice for all workers against the flexibilization and informalization of the economy.

In Kathmandu, Nepal, I got the chance to visit the main office of General Federation of Nepalese Trade Unions (GEFONT) and also to have a brief interview with its women section. I also have gathered union publications and some vernacular materials.

Some of the materials gathered during the time of fieldwork in Thailand and Nepal shall be deposited in as part of the collection of CSEAS library, Kyoto University.

Pictures

Picture 1. Interview with Aranya Pakapath (from ICEM-Thai) and Araya Kaewpradap, a women leader from GPO union.



Picture 2. Women workers in action: Rallies of women workers on March 8 in Bangkok.



Picture 3. Solidarity Factory: A woman workers is making a fair-trade t-shirt.



Picture 4. Asian Labour Conference in Bangkok: Unions are sharing their experiences and strategies



Picture 5. Interview with Pemba Lama, the secretary of Centrall Women Workers` Department (CWWD), the General Federation of Nepalese Trade Unions (GEFONT).

