Welcome to CDI.NEWS from the Centre for Democratic Institutions, Australia.

CDI is Australia’s foremost democracy promotion and training institution, working in the area of good governance (particularly parliaments, judiciaries, civil society and media) with a geographic focus on Southeast Asia and the Southwest Pacific.

CDI’s mission:
- To harness Australian and international best practice in support of developing countries’ needs for democratic governance

CDI aims to provide:
- high quality training programs in key democratic institutions and processes
- in-country technical assistance
- applied research

CDI’s core budget is provided by AusAID, Australia’s Agency for International Development.

CDI.NEWS will keep you informed periodically of activities and upcoming events at CDI.

This edition:

1. SCOPING CONFERENCE FOR THE PLANNED RESEARCH PROJECT ON DEMOCRATISATION IN EAST & SOUTHEAST ASIA

The Scoping Conference was held on 7-8 February at the ANU. It is the first stage of a planned research project for which a bid has been made for an Australian Research Council Discovery Grant. Academics, officials and students contributed to the process of narrowing the research issues. The conference addressed key themes in analysing the process of democratisation in East and Southeast Asia. The themes covered were: legislatures, electoral systems, elites, executives, rule of law, political parties, civil society, media and gender. The breadth of input and discussion has provided a sound basis on which to build the research project.

Link to CDI activities page including conference papers

2. INDONESIAN MEDIA AND DEMOCRATISATION PROJECT

Building on the ‘Transition to Publicly Accountable Broadcasting in Indonesia’ series this project, held on 1-8 February in Perth, Sydney and Melbourne involved collaboration between CDI, the ABC, Murdoch University’s Asia Research Centre, and School of Media Communications and Culture. This project was designed to assist in the process of building the human capital for a stronger and more effective public broadcaster to assist Indonesia in its transition to democracy. The program involved workshops on a range of issues, site visits and meetings with ABC practitioners, and attendance at the Curtin University conference ‘Mediating Human Rights and Democracy: Indonesia, Australia and the Netherlands’.

Link to Mediating Human Rights and Democracy Conference
3. PNG HIGH COURT TRAINING: DEPUTY REGISTRAR STUDY TOUR

Following discussions between the Chief Justice of Papua New Guinea, the Federal Court of Australia and CDI, it was agreed that Mr Clivson Philip, Executive Officer to the Chief Justice of PNG, would undertake a study tour to the Federal Court of Australia to examine various aspects of court administration, with an emphasis on the organization of the registry services. Mr Philip undertook a one month placement at the Federal Court in Brisbane and was able to meet with a wide variety of justices, registrars and court administrators and examine closely many aspects of the Federal and Queensland court systems.

4. ROUNDTABLE ON HUMANITARIAN INTERVENTION AFTER SEPTEMBER 11

On 12 February, the International Relations Department of the Australian National University hosted a roundtable on humanitarian intervention. The roundtable featured Ambassador Peter Van Walsum (Former President of the UN Security Council and Permanent Representative of the Netherlands) and discussed the impact of the events of September 11, and the subsequent 'War on Terrorism', on this 'new humanitarianism'. Ambassador Van Walsum spoke in favour of a concept of constructive ambiguity, arguing that for humanitarian intervention outside the direct mandate of a UN Security Council resolution to be constructive, the circumstances around which it will be employed must remain ambiguous. The recent report of the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty reached a different conclusion.

5. VIETNAMESE JUDICIAL TRAINING

Following a very successful exchange last year between the Judicial Training School of the Supreme People's Court of Vietnam and the Federal Court of Australia, CDI has organized the first leg of this year's program - a similar visit by a delegation headed by the Deputy Chief Justice of the Supreme People's Court of Vietnam to study Australia's court system. The delegation will observe proceedings at the High Court, the Federal Court, the Family Court, the ACT Supreme Court and the ACT Magistrates Court. The delegation will also call on the Director of Public Prosecutions and the Judicial Commission of New South Wales.

6. THAI OMBUDSMAN TOUR

A team of seven officials from the Thai Office of the Parliamentary Ombudsman will visit Canberra and Sydney from 21 April - 1 May. CDI will facilitate a 10 day program enabling the visitors to view first hand very practical aspects of Ombudsman office operations in Australia, and the Ombudsman's interactions with other review agencies. These activities build on the work done in CDI's technical assistance program (of 2000 & 2001). The visit will also incorporate presentations by the delegates to the annual Thai Update conference at the Australian National University, where Ombudsman Pichet will speak.

7. PNG ELECTION REPORTING WORKSHOP
To assist in the development of specialized reporting skills with a view to enhanced accountability in PNG, CDI with the Centre for International Journalism (CIJ) at the University of Queensland has facilitated an election reporting workshop in Port Moresby in March in anticipation of the impending national election. The workshop will have 20 participants come together over 5 days to discuss theoretical and practical issues surrounding election reporting. The workshop is fortunate to have experienced reporter on PNG political affairs, Sean Dorney, involved in the program.

Link to workshop program on website

8. PNG WEWAK CITIZEN’S EDUCATION PROJECT
CDI together with the Asia South Pacific Bureau of Adult Education (ASPBAE) will work with 2 civil society groups in PNG, HELP Resources and Baua Baua Popular Education Troupe, to assist in the design and implementation of an innovative civil society program to disseminate key government publications related to the promotion of scrutiny and government accountability. The project will prepare, promote and distribute discussion materials, leading to a series of ‘learning circles’ workshops. Preparations for this project are underway and an interim report will be available at the time of the next newsletter.

9. PNG NATIONAL BROADCASTING CORPORATION SCOPING STUDY
Following discussions with the Managing Director of the PNG National Broadcasting Corporation Mr Kristoffa Ninkama, AusAID and the ABC, CDI will fund two senior ABC managers to undertake a scoping study of NBC to assess its current situation and needs, and to determine how a project to address those needs might be carried out. The aim of the project is to strengthen the capacity of NBC to deliver democracy and development information to the rural people of PNG.

10. 2002 CONSULTATIVE GROUP MEETING
The 2002 Consultative Group Meeting in May will be the final meeting for the current membership. The Government will appoint a new Consultative Group for the new contract term. The Consultative Group oversees the work of CDI and individual members assist in program delivery. The current Consultative Group has been particularly effective in the formation period of the Centre.

More information about the Consultative Group

** Featured Web Article **
New Item: CDI.NEWS will feature in each issue an interesting article relating to democracy and good governance.

11. ‘THE END OF THE TRANSITION PARADIGM’ BY THOMAS CAROTHERS
This edition features the article by Thomas Carothers, entitled “The End of the Transition Paradigm”, from the Journal of Democracy Vol 13 No 1. Carothers questions the way many democracy promotion activists have come to understand the transition paradigm. He argues that there is no inevitability about the transition to democracy after the passing of authoritarian regimes. One conclusion flowing from Carothers’ analysis is that there is no ‘one size fits all’ solution to building democracy. Each country presents unique issues and requires unique approaches.

Carothers’ article can be found on the Journal of Democracy website

All suggestions and comments are welcome.

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