



ASSA News

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From the Chairman's Desk



This year, we celebrate the fifth Anniversary of the ASEAN Social Security Association with consistent and substantial developments. From the very first day of its birth, the

ASSA has consistently grown and obtained great achievements. We had a pleasure of welcoming the Philippine Health Insurance Corporation as the 10th member to the ASSA family at the 10th ASSA Board Meeting held in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam on 2nd August 2002.

I would like to extend my sincerest thanks to my predecessor, Mr. Somchai Wattana of Social Security Office, Thailand for his great works in fostering the cooperation and friendship among the member institutions and for his contributions to the growth of the ASSA.

My thanks also extend to other former Chairpersons of ASSA, especially Prof. Dr Awaloedin Djamin, the first ASSA Chairman, for their continuous efforts to make the ASSA become a dynamic and effective social security forum in the region.

This issue of ASSA News highlights the 10th ASSA Board Meeting held in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam and it updates us on most current news and developments of the member institutions.



Solidarity: Leaders from Social Security Institutions in the region gather at the ASSA Board Meeting in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam



Cultural shows: The Vietnamese dancers perform a traditional figure during the Opening Ceremony of the 10th ASSA Board Meeting in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam.

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HIGHLIGHTS OF THE 10TH ASSA BOARD MEETING HELD IN HO CHI MINH CITY, VIETNAM



Speech delivering: Dr. Nguyen Huy Ban, Director General of Vietnam Social Security delivers his opening remarks at the 10th ASSA Board Meeting

Presentation of the articles under Good Practices

Members' Representatives presented three new articles under the "Good Practices" section in the ASSA website as follows:

1. "E-Info Tap Kiosk system" by Employees Trust Fund, Brunei
2. "Paying social security benefits through the pay-agents at commune level" by Vietnam Social Security, Vietnam
3. "Transacting with the GSIS: Anytime, Anywhere" by Government Service Insurance System, Philippines



Duty exchange: Mr. Somchai Wattana (left) hands the ASSA Emblem over to Dr. Nguyen Huy Ban, new Chairman of ASSA



On the agenda: The delegates of 11 social security institutions from 7 ASEAN countries take part in the most important event of the ASSA.

Admission of new ASSA membership

As the Board accepted to consider the application of the Philippine Health Insurance Corporation for ASSA Membership at the previous ASSA Board Meeting held in Cebu, and after thorough discussions on this matter the Board then resolved to admit the Philippine Health Insurance Corporation (PhilHealth) as a Member Institution of the ASSA.

During the meeting, the Social Security Organisation (SSO), Lao PDR expressed its readiness and wish to become a member of the ASSA. The Board then agreed to consider the application for ASSA membership of the SSO-Lao PDR as soon as the ASSA Secretariat receives an official application from the SSO-Lao PDR.

The Board also brought to the table the application of the Department of Family and Community Services (FaCS), Australia to be an ASSA observer. After open discussions and gathering the opinions of Board Members who were presented at the Meeting, the Board decided that the ASSA Member Institutions should be given more time to study on this issue, then it was agreed to postpone the consideration of FaCS application to the next ASSA Board Meeting.

Cultural activities

After the ASSA Board Meeting, the delegates visited Duc Ba Cathedral and other famous architectures in Ho Chi Minh City. The delegates also took cultural visits to the Cu Chi tunnels located 35 km north-west of Ho Chi Minh City in Cu Chi district. Lying between the Saigon and Vam Co rivers, this historical area is known nation-wide having been a stubborn resistance base during wars of liberation.

The ASSA pre-Board Meeting Seminar

Prior to the ASSA Board Meeting, a half-day seminar on "Investment and Customer Satisfaction Strategies" was held by Vietnam Social Security with the participation of delegates from the member institutions, observers and guests. In the seminar, the leaders from social security institutions in the region shared the experiences with Employees Provident Fund (EPF), Malaysia and Department of Family and Community Services (FaCS), Australia on customer service delivery. They also exchanged views with ILO expert on fund investment issues.



Experience sharing: (from left) Ms. Rose Marie Greve of ILO Hanoi, Mr. Mark Anthony Sullivan of FaCS, Mr. Vijaya Kumar of EPF, Malaysia were speakers at the ASSA pre-Board seminar.



Beauty smiles: Ben Duoc-Cu Chi Temple, the War Memorial stands as a salute to a resistance war of Vietnamese nation

Notre Dame de Saigon: ASSA delegates pose for a photo in front of Duc Ba Cathedral in HCM city



A tight fit: the delegates are entering into an underground branch of Cu Chi tunnels

THE ASSA ADMITTED A NEW MEMBER PHILIPPINE HEALTH INSURANCE CORPORATION

At the 10th ASSA Board Meeting held in Ho Chi Minh city, Vietnam on 2nd August 2002, the ASSA Board accepted the Philippine Health Insurance Corporation (PhilHealth) as an ASSA member institution. This is a special feature introducing PhilHealth to all members of the ASSA.

Philippine Health Insurance Corporation (PhilHealth or PHIC) was created under Republic Act 7875 of 1995 or the National Health Insurance Act of 1995 to establish a new and enhanced Medicare Program through the National Health Insurance Program.



PhilHealth is a tax-exempt government corporation attached to the Department of Health. PhilHealth assumed the responsibility of administering the former Medicare Program for government and private sector employees, with its landmark transfer from the Government Service Insurance System (GSIS) and the Social Security System (SSS).

Since its creation, PhilHealth aims to provide health insurance coverage (i.e., financial access to health services) within 15 years, to all Filipinos to ensure affordable, accessible, adequate and quality health care services with priority to the marginalized and indigent sectors.

■ VISION AND MISSION

To be a world-class corporation providing accessible, affordable, adequate and quality health care for all Filipinos through a viable and progressive health insurance.

As a financial intermediary, PhilHealth shall continuously evolve a sustainable National health Insurance Program that shall:

- Extend a broader membership base leading towards universal coverage;
- Ensure better benefits for its members at affordable cost;
- Establish close coordination with its clients through a strong partnership with health care providers and all stakeholders; and
- Provide effective internal information and formulate financial management systems that will effect the delivery of quality health care services.

■ PROGRAMS OPERATED BY PHILHEALTH

Indigent Program

The Indigent Program, also referred to as "Medicare para sa Masa" ("Medicare for the Masses/

Common people") aims to provide Medicare privileges to the marginalized sector of Filipino society. Target members of the program are those belonging to the lowest 25% of the population. The program is implemented through the partnership of the local government units (LGUs) with PhilHealth. The LGU and National Government share the premium payments for the indigents to be enrolled. Other government agencies and officials as well as private entities may also participate in the program by paying the LGU premium counterpart.

Individually Paying Program (IPP)

The Individually Paying Program (IPP) is aimed at covering that sector of the population, which belongs to the informal sector and has the means to pay for their own premiums. The IPP caters to the various classifications of occupations like entrepreneurs, self-earning professionals, members of the agricultural sector, members of the informal sector like fish and cigarette vendors, and other workers including those working overseas.

Non-Paying Program

The Non-Paying Program is aimed to ensure easier access to health care services by the retirees and pensioners from the government and private sectors.

Program for the employed sector

This program ensures that employees, including household help enjoy Medicare benefits by mandatory PhilHealth contributions for those in the private and government sectors.

■ PHILHEALTH BENEFITS

Effective from December 1999, PhilHealth implemented a unified benefit package for all PhilHealth members. This benefit package includes the following categories of personal health services:

Inpatient hospital care:

- Room and board;
- Services of health care professionals;
- Diagnostic, laboratory, medical examination services
- Use of surgical or medical equipment and facilities;
- Prescription drugs and biologicals, subject to the limitations stated in section 37 of Act 7875; and
- Inpatient education packages.

Outpatient care:

- Services of health care professionals;
- Diagnostic, laboratory, medical examination services
- Personal preventive services;
- Prescription drugs and biologicals, subject to the limitations described in section 37 of Act 7875;
- Emergency and transfer service

Prime Minister entrusts VSS with new mission

On 17 December 2002, Prime Minister Phan Van Khai made the statement at the general meeting of Vietnam Social Security held in Hanoi to implement the Governmental Decree 100/2002/NĐ-CP on its functions, duties, and organization. "VSS is to step by step steadfastly widen social security system to cover all working population, take measures to reform health care mechanism, extend the voluntary health insurance schemes providing health care for the poor, leading towards universal health insurance", the PM said.

Following the Decision on transferring Vietnam Health Insurance (VHI) to Vietnam Social Security (VSS) early 2002, this Decree makes VSS a unique public social security system which is responsible for implementation of national social security policies and programs including pension health care schemes. The meeting was attended by Minister of Finance, concurrently Chairman of VSS's Governing Board Nguyen Sinh Hung, Minister of Internal Affairs Do Quang Trung, leaders of Vietnam Social Security and its directors from social security provincial offices through out the countries.



Reform spirit: Prime Minister Phan Van Khai delivers a speech at the VSS's Meeting for implementing the Government Decree on its new functions.

Central Provident Fund Board attains ISO certification



General Manager of CPF B receives the ISO Certification

CPFB makes great stride in its quest for quality and excellence when it attains yet another ISO 9001:2000 certification for two of its key processes, Collection of Funds and Customer Service on 11 September 2002.

CPFB firmly believes in providing excellent services to its customers. The ISO certification

gives the added quality assurance to our customers that the Board has put in place an efficient collection system to allow timely and accurate collection and crediting of funds. We also seek to excel in CPF services by establishing a quality management system for all our counter services, call centers, electronic services and public communication.

The ISO journey started in September 2001 when CPFB decided to adopt the ISO 9001 standard in managing its key business processes. The entire ISO certification effort was a mammoth task. It was a Board-wide effort involving management, senior officers and staff from various departments. The ISO working committees, led by management representatives, were formed to plan and manage the various processes and functions. Quality policies and objectives were formulated and designed with our customers in mind. Our work processes have been

improved upon and streamlined to enable us to maintain high service standards at both our front-end and backend services. Improvements were made at all levels. More than just a documentation exercise, staff from various departments including those in the branch offices met regularly to look into ways to identify potential problem areas and to suggest various means to correct the problems or prevent the problems from occurring in the first place. As a result of strong team work and commitment in the quality effort, the work processes at all CPF offices were streamlined, standardized and documented in the online manual so as to develop a consistent quality management system.

The staff's efforts and commitment in the quality journey paid off when CPFB was awarded the ISO 9001:2000 certification on 11 September 2002. Recognizing that quality is a race without a finishing line, the Board would continue to adopt the ISO standards in managing its processes and expand the scope of certification to include records and systems and disbursement of funds processes in 2003.



CPFB attains ISO Certification for two of its key processes- Collection of Fund and Customer Service

Text-SSS puts information at members' fingertips

The Philippine Social Security System (SSS) introduced a text-based information service that allows members to inquire about their membership data via mobile phone.

Text-SSS is a short messaging service (SMS)-based information service system that allows members to inquire about their number of contributions and status of loan applications using text messages. For a minimal fee of 2.50 Philippine pesos per inquiry sent through text messaging, a member can now have an alternate means of getting information without having to visit an SSS office.

In the long-term, the SSS is studying the possibility of providing more detailed information to members through SMS, wherein members can inquire about their membership records and receive the response in the form of text messages.

Electronic commerce is another potential use of SMS technology, wherein self-employed and voluntary members can pay their contributions and loan repayments through money transfer via SMS.



SSS launched the SSS Text Messaging Service during the SSS Anniversary celebration on September 02, 2002. (from left) SSS President Corazon de la Paz, Department of Finance Secretary Jose Isidro Camacho, SMART President Napoleon Nazareno and Wolfpac Communication Managing Director Myla Villanueva.

SSS introduces new payment scheme for benefit claims

As part of its efforts to speed up settlement of claims, the Philippine Social Security System (SSS) will implement a new payment scheme wherein members' sickness and maternity benefits can be paid through SSS' accredited banks.

This new procedure assures faster and safer settlement of claims for sickness and maternity benefits since it would eliminate the waiting period for check clearing and avoid losses due to pilferage or wrong delivery.

At present, payment of sickness and maternity benefit claims are made by checks, which are mailed to the employers. There have been instances where checks have been delayed, lost or delivered to the wrong address.

Payments through the bank will allow companies to get their settlements safely and quickly and will immediately be credited to their savings or current accounts.

The program will be implemented as a pilot project in the National Capital Region, and later expanded to other regions of the country.

SSS eases requirements for delinquent employers

The Philippine Social Security System (SSS) has eased the requirements for employers who have been delinquent in remitting contributions and loan repayments, allowing them to settle their liabilities on installment basis.

The installment payment scheme would allow cash-strapped companies to update and spread their accounts in several months, but immediately restore the SSS privileges of their employees. Upon approval of the installment plan of the delinquent employer, short-term loan privileges of their employees will immediately be restored.

SSS records show that more than 255,500 of the total 633,306 registered employers are delinquent. The amount due from delinquent companies totals more than 6 billion Philippine pesos, including penalties. Loan privileges and other benefits of employees of delinquent companies have been suspended until the liabilities are settled. These privileges include salary loan, a popular facility for SSS members, as well as sickness and maternity benefits. Delinquent employers could submit proposals to pay on installment within 30 days after they receive a letter from the SSS demanding payment for their liabilities. Otherwise, the SSS will file a case in court for failure to remit the contributions and loan remittances of their employees. Employers seeking an installment plan would be required to pay five percent of the total delinquency as down payment and issue post-dated checks to cover the balance. The total amount, however, would become due if the employer defaulted in at least two monthly installments and the SSS would demand immediate payment.

SSS accepts direct payments under new teller system

A computerized teller facility that provides members the convenience of paying contributions and other remittances directly to the institution has been recently introduced by the Philippine Social Security System (SSS). The new teller system is part of the SSS program to improve its collection infrastructure and give its members an additional payment window. The launching of the new teller system was part of various activities, which marked the 45th anniversary of the SSS on 01 September 2002.

The SSS has accredited commercial banks to accept contribution and loan payments. Since banks' office hours are only from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., the new system augments the bank services by giving the members more time to remit. The direct payment system will allow the SSS to realize some savings from bank service fees and expect faster posting of members' payments. The new teller system would be implemented in 48 SSS branches nationwide.

SSS launches Internet-based inquiry program

The Philippine Social Security System (SSS) has launched a computer-based inquiry program that gives members on-line access to information such as their contributions and loanable amount through the Internet.

Through the new system, members can check their membership status, number of contributions, and loan eligibility anytime and anywhere, accessed through a link from the SSS home page at its Internet address, <http://www.sss.gov.ph>. The system would later be expanded to cover benefit eligibility and status of loan applications and claims.

EPF Introduces e-payment Service

The Employees Provident Fund (EPF) in collaboration with three local banks namely Maybank, Public Bank and Bumiputra Commerce Bank has introduced the e-payment service to allow employers to pay their employees monthly contributions through the banks' Internet banking system. The free service was made first available in April 2002. To use the e-payment service, an employer must maintain a current account with any of the bank and apply for e-payment service at the account-holding branch.

The objective of the e-payment service is to provide an alternative for employers to pay their EPF contributions at their own convenience through the Internet without having to leave the office or their jobs at hand. Currently, employers have the option of making payments at the various service counters such as at EPF offices, via mail, or through appointed agent banks.

With the introduction of this online payment facility employers can now pay their contributions faster, accurately and on time. In addition, employers can avoid being charged penalty for late submission of contributions by paying contributions on time. With the introduction of e-payment service, collection of contributions and receipt of contribution schedules from employer has become more effective and efficient. Further, with this new service, both employers and the EPF are able to save time and money as these transactions are now done electronically.

EPF reaches out to its members during festive season

The Employees Provident Fund, (EPF) of Malaysia, took advantage of the exodus of motorists during the Hari Raya festive holidays by distributing 100,000 leaflets to the public at several toll plazas in Kuala Lumpur on 4 December 2002. The objective of the exercise was to remind members to update their particulars, nominate their beneficiaries and to assist EPF in locating members who are aged 65 and above who have not withdrawn their savings.

This is one of the latest approaches taken by the Fund to communicate to customers through various channels. It was hoped that through this latest effort members would be encouraged to play active role in facilitating any dealings with the EPF.



EPF'S SERVICE CENTRES

The EPF has established service centres in various locations where it is not cost-effective to open branches. This allows the EPF to have greater reach to serve its members without incurring unnecessary operational costs. Currently, there are 14 state and 53 branch EPF offices around the country.

In 2002, three new service centres were established in Alor Gajah, Melaka; Kuala Kangsar, Perak; and Langkawi, Kedah. Services provided at these centres include obtaining and submitting benefit application forms, obtaining statement of accounts, handling inquiries and complaints, consultation and dissemination of information. The centres are opened twice a week and are manned by not more than 3 staff. The staff is deployed from existing state and branch offices.

As these centres received good response from members, the EPF plans to establish five more centres in 2003.

EPF enhances its Internet Services

The Employees Provident Fund (EPF) will have more of its services available through the Internet when the EPF Interactive Website (IWS) is launched early 2003. The IWS will allow members to check their statement of accounts, update their personal information and receive updates on their withdrawals.

For employers, presently they are able to make payment of contributions through the Internet via 3 banks that are collaborating with the EPF. More banks are in the pipeline.

Agreement between Thailand and the Netherlands on the Export of Social Security Benefits

Mr. Suwat Liptapanlop, Minister of Labour, Thailand and H.E. Mr. Gerard J. H. C. Kramer, The Netherlands Ambassador to Thailand signed the Agreement on the Export of Social Security Benefits on behalf of the Government of the Kingdom of Thailand and on behalf of the Government of the Kingdom of the Netherlands on

11 November 2002 at the Social Security Office, Thailand.

Due to developments in the Dutch national legislation, a change is forthcoming with regard to persons entitled to receive social security benefits in the Netherlands but living abroad. Under the Export Restrictions on Benefits Act, (BEU), persons who are living abroad or staying outside the Netherlands for any period longer than three months will no longer be entitled to claim social security benefits as of 1 January 2001.

By virtue of the BEU Act, beneficiaries of Dutch social insurance benefits lose their entitlement to these benefits if they live in a country which the Netherlands has not concluded an agreement on the enforcement of these benefits. Therefore, the Netherlands Government requested Thai Government to allow the implementing organization in Thailand (the Social Security Office) to verify the entitlement of benefits on behalf of Dutch implementing agency. This request was approved by the Cabinet on 30 July 2002 and on 29 October 2002.



From this time onwards, the SSO has to give its support and expertise to enable Dutch people to access benefits to which they are entitled from their home country. This is the first important step for SSO Thailand to establish cooperation on the international social security agreement.

Provident Fund Board



Mr Tan Y. M. Willie

The Central Provident Fund Board (CPFB), Singapore, has a new leader at its helm. Mr Tan Yoke Meng Willie has been appointed General Manager of the CPF Board with effect from 1 September 2002. Mr Willie

Tan joined CPFB as the Senior Deputy General Manager in January 2002. Prior to this, Mr Tan had been a Board Member of CPFB from November 1996 to November 2001. Mr Willie Tan had also served in various capacities in Singapore's Ministry of Defence, Ministry of National Development and the Prime Minister's Office (Public Service Division). His last appointment before joining the Central Provident Fund Board was Deputy Secretary of the Ministry of Health.



Mr Lim Han Soon

Mr Willie Tan succeeded Mr Lim Han Soon who retired after 21 years of sterling service with the Board. For his outstanding public service, Mr Lim was awarded the Public Administration Medal (Gold) in 1996. Mr Lim

was also one of the founding Board Members of ASSA. He had served as Chairman of ASSA from August 2000 to August 2001. During his tenure as Chairman, ASSA launched its own website on September 2000 and started the website section featuring member institutions' "Good Practices" for the purpose of sharing and learning. During his tenure, the number of ASSA member institutions also increased from eight to nine with the addition of Brunei's Employees Trust Fund (ETF) to its membership.

National Social Security Fund of Uganda (NSSF) visits EPF Malaysia

Employees Provident Fund, (EPF) of Malaysia being the largest pension fund in Malaysia continues to be a source of reference and information for many Social Security Institutions and Pension Fund Management agencies around the world. On 5 August 2002 a delegation

comprising five members of the National Social Security Fund (NSSF) of Uganda headed by its Chairman Mr. Geoffrey Onegi-Obel visited the EPF and paid a courtesy visit to the office of the Chairman of EPF Board Tan Sri Abdul Halim Ali and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Datuk Azlan Zainol. The objective of the visit was to forge mutual cooperation between EPF and the NSSF and to exchange views and information on investment activities. Dr. Roslan A. Ghaf far, Deputy Chief Executive Officer (Investment) briefed the delegation on the EPF's investment activities.



SSS play host to study visits by Foreign Government Agencies and Social Security Institutions

The Philippine Social Security System (SSS) played host and conducted briefings to a number of study and field groups from foreign government agencies and social security institutions during the last semester of 2002. Organized in cooperation with the Asian Development Bank (ADB), a briefing on the Philippine Social Security System was made on 04 June 2002 to the National Task Force Team of Indonesia. The briefing was intended to assist and guide the team in its effort to reform Indonesia's National Social Security System, particularly on policy formulation.

On 13 June 2002, the Director of the National Pension and Provident Fund of Bhutan met with SSS officials to be apprised on SSS' experiences and obtain first hand knowledge about its information technology structure.

Members of the Indonesian Parliament on 08 October 2002 visited the SSS for an exchange of information and experiences on employees' welfare and protection of overseas workers.

Again in cooperation with the ADB, a briefing for senior officials and staff of the ADB from member countries in Asia and Latin America was held on 23 October 2002 as a continuing part of the ADB seminar on "Social Protection for the Poor in Asia and Latin America".



Amended RP-Spain Convention signed

The Republic of the Philippines and the Kingdom of Spain formally signed the **Amended Social Security Convention between the Republic of the Philippines and the Kingdom of Spain** in Manila on 12 November 2002. Signatories to the Convention were Ms. Corazon S. De La Paz, Philippine Social Security System (SSS) President & CEO, Mr. Winston F. Garcia, Government Service Insurance System (GSIS) President and General Manager and Mr. Ramon Gil-Casares, Spanish Deputy Foreign Minister.



SSS and GSIS sign amended agreement with Spain. Signing for the Philippines were GSIS President Winston Garcia (left) and SS President Corazon de la Paz (right). Signing for Spain was Deputy Foreign Minister Ramon Gil-Casares

The amended Social Security Convention supersedes the original Convention on Social

Security between Spain and the Philippines that was signed on 21 May 1988 and extends the applicability of the Convention to public sector workers covered by the Government Service Insurance System.

The Convention was amended upon mutual consent of the contracting parties to keep abreast with developments in the field of social security and thus further provide protection and enhance the well being of Filipino and Spanish workers.

VSS Officials visit SSO, Thailand

High level officials from Vietnam visited the Social Security Office (SSO) from 22 to 25 August 2002. The visiting officials comprised Dr Nguyen Huy Ban, ASSA Chairman and Director General of Vietnam Social Security (VSS), Chairman Ha Cong Dong, the People's Committee of Hoa Binh Province, Mrs Nguyen Thi Khuyen, Deputy Director of the People's Committee Office of Hoa Binh Province and Ms Phung Thi Mai Oanh, International Relations Officer, VSS.



The objectives of this visit were to acquire technical expertise on overview of Thailand Social Security, Capitation Payment of Social Security Fund, the operation of the 550's Computer Centre, Hotline Information Service Unit 1506 and Bureau of Investment Management.

The delegation also took visits to SSO offices in Chachoengsao and Chonburi provinces where they were briefed on the medical services provided for insured persons in the provinces. In addition, this visit aimed to strengthen the close ties between Thailand and Vietnam, and exchange technical experiences of both countries under the cooperation of ASSA.

Thai Labour Minister visits Industrial Rehabilitation Centre, SSO



Mr Suwat Liptapanlop, Thai Minister of Labour visited SSO Industrial Rehabilitation Centre (IRC) on October 10, 2002. The IRC was established in 1985 in collaboration with the Royal Thai Government and the Japanese Government.

The objectives of this Centre are to provide rehabilitation services to the disabled insured persons caused by work-related injuries under the Social Security Act in order that they can re-enter to work or to enable them to be self-employed. IRC's services including medical, and vocational rehabilitation which aim to enhance the ability of the disabled to be able to reutilize to earn their own living and live well in the society. At present, the rehabilitation centre in Pathumthani Province has a capacity of providing services for 200 persons yearly.

Due to the Cabinet Resolution on September 6, 1994. The SSO has to establish 4 regional rehabilitation centres in the East, the Northeast, the North and the South of the country in order to increase the accessibility of the services to disabled insured persons. At present, the Rehabilitation Centre for the Eastern region in Rayong province has already established and it will be able to start delivering services in March 2003 with the aim to receive more number of 200 disabled insured persons per year. The extension of this rehabilitation services for employees and insured persons for the whole region. In addition, SSO has planed to develop the current IRC to be the Rehabilitation Centre for Southeast Asian region.

The Project Steering Committee (PSC), Lao PDR visit SSO-Thailand

Two groups of the Project Steering Committee (PSC), Lao PDR visited Social Security Office, Thailand between 25 - 30 August 2002 and 13 September 2002 respectively.

The first group of the PSC, headed by Mr Douangchanh Mouksavanh, Director General of the

Social Security Department. The latter headed by Mr. Somnuk Vorasarn, Director General of Lao SSO. The objectives of these visits were to exchange views in relevant social security areas, and to learn about the management of social security fund. During the visits of the groups, the SSO provided them with lectures. They also visited the provincial SSO in Phra Nakhon Si Ayuthaya, Rayong, Chonburi, Phitsanulok, Nong Bua Lumpoo and Nong Khai to observe the SSO's operation.



Australian Minister visits VSS

On January 27, 2003 the Honorable Amanda Vanstone, Minister of Family and Community services (FaCS)-Commonwealth Australia, headed a delegation to pay an official visit to Vietnam Social Security in Hanoi. The Minister's entourage comprised the Ms Sue Vardon, CEO of Centrelink and other senior officers from FaCS and Centrelink. The Minister was received by the VSS Director General Dr. Nguyen Huy Ban and the senior officials of VSS. During the meeting, Minister Vanstone and Dr. Ban exchanged views and shared up-to-date information relating to the social security developments. The two leaders also discussed about the cooperative activities between the two agencies in the coming years.

In the evening, the Minister and her delegation were invited to a welcome dinner hosted by Dr. Nguyen Huy Ban.



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