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*Few words in Mr. Somnuk Vorasarn,
ASSA Chairman speech, during the ASSA
Board Meeting in Vientiane.*

...Social Security System is a very challenging issue because of the rapid change of the socio-economic conditions in the world today. To address this issue, we need to maintain our rate of progress and reduce future uncertainties. Social Security is one area where planning for future is very important as we all face the same risks that are unavoidable, regardless of the level of socio-economic development. Social Security System, however, can help to manage, mitigate and alleviate the impacts of these social risks. Global trade trends have led to increasingly borderless economies, reliance on high technology reducing formal sector employment opportunities, and increase workers mobility. All these issues, as well as many other factors, have impacts to the future of Social Security Systems.

The experiences of other countries introducing Health Insurance as part of their strategies for reducing poverty and improving the health status of their populations are very relevant to all ASSA Members. Therefore, it is important to us to accept opportunity to learn from experiences of social security institutions in this region as well as other regions. Different policy approaches and systems should be used in order to expand social protection and provide access to health care to the formal and informal sector with the aim of achieving Universal Coverage. Another issue where we do need to have proper plans for is the protection for aging people that is jeopardizing pension funds worldwide.

At this auspicious occasion, I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to all ASSA Board Members for their cooperative attention and constant support to our momentum to develop our social security institution. I would also call for your continuing cooperation with Lao SSO, as well as other member institutions, in deploying our efforts to actively carry out mandate and responsibilities, envisioning ASSA as a vibrant dynamic and well-respected institution...

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Photo of ASSA Board Members & Heads of delegation



Photo of all delegates



Ms. Orie Andari Sutadji, former ASSA Chairperson, presented a souvenir to His Excellency Mr. Laoly Fayphengnua



A view of the ASSA Board Meeting



Mr. Padeumphone Sonthany (in the middle), new ASSA Secretary General, presided the ASSA Secretariat Meeting



Visit to Kaisorn Phomviharn museum



The delegates enjoyed Lumvong Lao, Lao standard dance

The 16th ASSA Board Meeting in Vientiane, Lao PDR



His Excellency Mr. Laoly Fayphengnua, Vice Minister of Labor and Social Welfare made his welcome address to the delegates



Social Security Organization, Laos hosted the **16th ASSA Board Meeting on September 29 to October 1, 2005**. The meeting was held at Lao Plaza Hotel in Vientiane, which representatives of the 8 member countries to ASSA as well as observers and speakers have attended more than 75 people.

The event was started with a one-day Pre-ASSA Board Meeting on September 29, 2005. The participants heard and learnt from 5 speakers who presented their experiences on social security arrangements and operation.

On September 30, 2005, the 16th ASSA Board Meeting was started with the Good Practices presentations from 3 ASSA Member Institutions, such as PT.ASKES, Indonesia; Social Security System, Philippines; and Social Security Organization, Lao PDR. Then Ms. Orie Andari Sutadji, ASSA Chairperson made her speech to officially declare the commencement of the meeting. The meeting was conducted under a

very important agenda. Firstly, the confirmation of Minutes of the 15th ASSA Board Meeting was made. Secondly, the participants heard the report of Secretariat



The Handover of ASSA Chairmanship from Indonesia to Laos

Meeting in Kuala Lumpur by Secretary General. Thereafter, discussed on some crucial points regarding ASSA activities such as training and comparative studies for the ASSA member Institutions, the adaptation the Logo of ASSA, the organization of ASSA Training Committee, and the establishment of Permanent ASSA Secretariat, the presentation of ASSA website to the ASSA Board, and other outstanding issues.

One important point of the meeting agenda was the handover of ASSA Chairmanship from Indonesia to Laos, where Ms. Orie Andari Sutadji, the former ASSA Chairperson presented to Mr. Somnuk Vorasarn, Director General of Lao SSO, the emblem of ASSA as the symbolic transfer of the ASSA Chairmanship to the Director General of Lao SSO. At the same



ASSA Board Members & Heads of delegation took a photo with invited speakers



Indonesian delegation presented a song during the farewell dinner

time, Mr. Datuk Azlan bin Mohd Zainol was assigned as New ASSA Vice-Chairman; And Mr. Padeumphone Sonthany, Deputy Director General of Lao SSO, as New ASSA Secretary General.

During the meeting, all heads of delegation were wearing beautiful Lao silk shirts provided by the Lao SSO, to symbolize the solidarity among the ASSA Members. After the meeting, some cultural visits were also made to Museum of Kaisorn Phomviharn, the late President of Laos; Nikone Handicraft Center; Nam Ngum Hydropower; and Nam Ngum Lake.

Getting to know Social Security Organization, Lao PDR.

The Social Security Organization was established on June 1, 2001, in accordance with Prime Minister's Decree number 207 on social security scheme for enterprises workers that is relevant to the Labor Law of Lao PDR, and it also refers to the social policy of the Government. The Prime Minister's Decree number 207 is the main legislation which sets out the principles, regulations, organizations, procedures and measures to ensure enterprise employees' social welfare rights and benefits with the objective of improving their living conditions and contributing to national socio-economic development. According to the Decree, employers employing 10 or more employees are required to participate to the social security scheme compulsorily, and those who are employing less than 10 workers can also apply for participation to the scheme, but after joining they are required to perform similar rights and obligations like people under compulsory system.

Social Security Organization is officially abbreviated as **SSO**, and it is a juridical entity guided by the Minister of Labor & Social Welfare. SSO has the Board of Directors as its supreme management body, which is composed of 11 members

comprising 3 representatives of the Government, 4 representatives of the Employers, and 4 representatives of the Employees.

The Fund is contributed by the employers and the employees. It is obviously mentioned in the Decree that the government has duty for guarantying the sustainability of the fund.

In practice, the government also provided office building and budget to SSO in the starting period. The main role of SSO is to ensure social security rights to the enterprises workers. SSO provides 8 benefit types to its members:

Health care benefit, Sickness benefit, Maternity benefit, Funeral benefit, Working injury or Occupational diseases benefit, Invalidity pension, Retirement pension, and Survivors pension. The capitation payment system is applied for Health care benefit provided to insured persons, spouses and children under 18 of age.

Operational strategy of SSO is firstly to provide social security protection to targeted group in Vientiane Capital, and gradually expand the scheme to other provinces.



A seminar on Health Insurance and Hospital Financing for SSO Officers.



Participants of a Health seminar organized by BTC-SSO Project

On December 19 23, 2005, SSO held a seminar on **Health Insurance and Hospital Financing** at Vansana Hotel Nam Ngum Resort, Vientiane province. The seminar was participated by 40 people representing SSO Board of Directors, SSO Medical Board, SSO Executives, SSO Technical Officers, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare, and contracted hospitals of SSO.

The purpose of the seminar:

1. To compare results of costing study conducted in Mahosot hospital by SSO Officers with other results of costing studies conducted in 4 contracted hospitals of SSO.

2. To understand Methods and Trends of payment mechanism development of health insurance system; and quality of services development which were presented by German Expert. After hearing about the examples of development done by other countries, the participants made brainstorming to find out appropriate options to improve the quality of health services in Laos.

3. To assess results of training done by SSO staff on health economics, health systems, and health statistic in neighboring countries.

This seminar is one of various seminars which have been organized by SSO from time to time. The costing studies in the contracted hospitals were important activities of SSO. Based on the results of costing studies as well as the seminars, the SSO could effectively discuss with the contracted hospitals on capitation amount. Currently, SSO is in the process of preparing contracts with hospitals with the aim to provide insured members a better quality of services in contracted hospitals and to increase their satisfaction.



A seminar on Health Financing supported by BTC-SSO Project



A seminar on Actuarial Review of the Social Security Fund under the support of ILO Social Security Project

First SSO Branch Office opened in Savannakhet



His Excellency Mr. Leh Kakanya, Minister of Labor and Social Welfare, and Mr. Vilayvanh Phomkheh, the Governor of Savannakhet province at the opening ceremony

Since starting its operation in June 2001, Social Security Organization today possesses its first branch office.

The official inauguration of the new branch office was made in Savannakhet province, Southern part of Laos, on October 24, 2005. The ceremony was presided by His Excellency Mr. Le Kakanhya, Minister of Labor and Social

Welfare, with the presence of Mr. Vilayvanh Phomkheh, the Governor of Savannakhet province, representatives of SSO Board of Directors, SSO Medical Board, SSO Executives, local authorities, hospital, and enterprises.

As the objective of SSO, the extension aims to provide social protection to the targeted group within the province and to improve their living condition gradually. This also reflected the progress of Lao SSO operation.

Savannakhet has around 177 enterprises employing more than 14,000 workers that subject to be covered by the SSO system.

In terms of health care benefit, the contract has been made between SSO and Savannakhet hospital to facilitate insured persons and their dependants to have easy access for health care. According to the contract, the payment mechanism to be used between SSO and the hospital is the capitation system similar to the system used in the central level.

Visit to Social Security Organization by Cambodian delegates

On December 1 30, 2005, an official visit to SSO was made by the delegates from Ministry of Labor Vocational Training, the Kingdom of Cambodia. The delegation led by MR. SUM SOPHORN, Deputy Director of Social Security Department, who has been warmly welcome by the SSO Executive and staff.

The visit aims to learn and exchange experiences regarding institutional managements and system operation with SSO as Cambodian social security

system is going to be implemented soon. During the visit, the delegates have been guided to all operational procedures of SSO.

In addition, the Cambodian delegation has paid a courtesy visit to the Minister of Labor and Social Welfare and some high-ranking officials in the Ministry.



Cambodian delegates at the Internal Audit Division

In the conclusion day, the SSO Management has stressed the hope with the delegates of future cooperation between two countries and with the ASSA.

EPF WINS THE PUBLIC SERVICE QUALITY AWARD

The Employees Provident Fund (EPF) was awarded the Public Service Director General's Quality Award in recognition of its achievement in quality management. The Public Service Quality Awards, introduced in 1991, are widely recognized benchmarks for organizational excellence.



The criteria used to evaluate this award are the following:

- ☐ Output achievement and quality of service provided to the customers.
- ☐ Quality of the work processes in fulfilling customers expectations.
- ☐ Resource management.
- ☐ Senior management's commitment towards creating a quality focused work culture.

This recognition reaffirms the EPF's commitment to continuously improve its customer delivery systems and preserve and grow the savings of its members in accordance with best practices in investment and corporate governance.

EPF ANNUAL REPORT WINS AWARD

The EPF's Annual Report for the year 2003 has won the second prize in an Annual Report Competition for Statutory Bodies organized by the Dewan Bahasa and Pustaka or the National Language Hall. The award carries a cash prize of RM4000.00 and a trophy.

The EPF's Annual Report was the second best, out of a total of 50 organizations participated in the competition.

EPF ADOPTS BALANCED SCORECARD PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

The Employees Provident Fund (EPF) is looking beyond government-introduced Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to measure its performance by using Balanced Scorecard (BSC) to enhance management and operations at all levels within the organization.

The EPF implemented BSC strategic performance management system in two phases. The first phase, involved the development of performance management concept and methodology was carried out from September to December 2003. While the second phase, which involved the automation of the scorecard was implemented in August 2004. With this put in place, the corporate strategic plan for 2005 - 2007 was developed based on the BSC methodology and incorporated within the performance management system.

The BSC is important in promoting cultural change as it encourages team building and eradicates the silo mentality. By enabling staff at every level to understand the organization's total strategy and vision, the BSC will help involve all staff in the organization's strategic planning process.

EPF'S SARAWAK STATE OFFICE AWARDED ICT EXCELLENCE AWARD



The Employees Provident Fund's (EPF) State office in Sarawak was awarded the Sarawak Federal Secretary's Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Award in recognition of its excellent ICT services. The Honorable Datuk Dr. Maximus Johnithy Ongkili, Minister in the Prime Minister's Department, presented the award on 3 October 2005.

The Sarawak Federal Secretary's ICT Award is jointly organized by the Sarawak Federal Secretary's Office and the Sarawak Branch of the Malaysian Administrative Modernization and Management Planning Unit (MAMPU) to acknowledge federal agencies in Sarawak who have demonstrated excellence in the field of information technology.

The Award was created for the following objectives:

- ☐ To encourage and improve the usage of ICT as an enabling tool to improve performance, efficiency and productivity of federal agencies.
- ☐ To acknowledge and recognize the efforts, initiatives and investment on ICT made by federal agencies.
- ☐ To generate publicity on the success of ICT implementation and;
- ☐ To encourage healthy competition among federal agencies in using ICT to improve service quality.

EPF'S INTERNAL AUDIT PRACTICE RECEIVED SPECIAL AWARD

The Employees Provident Fund (EPF) was awarded with the "Most Promising Company" special award in recognition of its best internal audit practices. The award was presented at the Best Internal Audit Practice Award (BIAPA) presentation ceremony on 29 August 2005 organized by The Institute of Internal Auditors Malaysia (IIAM) and The Malaysian Institute of Accountants (MIA).

The BIAPA is a collaborative effort between The Institute of Internal Auditors Malaysia (IIAM) and The Malaysian Institute of Accountants (MIA) to promote the highest standards in internal audit practices.

The EPF was chosen for the award based on the following criteria:

- ☐ Demonstrating internal audit best practices of companies via a dedicated internal audit department.
- ☐ Audit strategies.
- ☐ Audit process and enablers.
- ☐ Audit resource capabilities.



GSIS, DepEd forge MOA on updating teachers' service records

The GSIS has agreed to finance the updating and encoding of the service records (SRs) of more than half a million teaching and nonteaching staff of the Department of Education (DepEd).

The move, which is estimated to cost at least P17 million, would enable all DepEd personnel to fully enjoy their benefits and privileges from the state pension fund.

PGM Winston Garcia said the updating project will be undertaken in the division levels of the DepEd using GSIS-provided software and format, and will take about six months to complete.

The physical encoding of SRs of an estimated 520,660 DepEd teaching and nonteaching personnel is the biggest obstacle to the full updating of the individual members' accounts with the GSIS since this entails the uploading of millions of documents to the GSIS computer system, Garcia said.

"The GSIS Board has approved the signing of a memorandum of agreement (MOA) with the DepEd for this project, and we have initially allotted P17.2 million for an estimated 550,000 service records to be encoded," he said.

The GSIS chief explained that under the proposed MOA, the DepEd shall provide human resources, encoding centers, and computer hardware for the updating, validation, and encoding of the DepEd employees' SRs.

The proposed MOA likewise calls for both the GSIS and DepEd to jointly undertake regional seminar-workshops for school superintendents and members of the division task force on the guidelines for the implementation of the project.

The two agencies will also form a composite team to monitor, assess, and evaluate the project development and its accomplishments until such time that the updating of SRs of teachers and other DepEd employees is completed.

GSIS website bags Philippine Webby's People's Choice award

The Government Service Insurance System (GSIS) website www.gsis.gov.ph bagged the distinction as the most popular government site after receiving the Philippine Web Award's (PWA) People's Choice in the e-Government category over the weekend.

The GSIS website bested other government websites in the category, including those of the Bureau of Internal Revenue, Bureau of Animal Industry, DBP Data Center, Provincial Government of Bulacan, National Kidney and Transplant Institute and the Local Government Academy.

With the recognition, the GSIS site is now officially a part of the elite circle of the "Best of the Philippine Web," a reputation it shares with some of the finest Filipino-developed websites this year.

GSIS President and General Manager Winston Garcia, the chief architect behind the many groundbreaking features implemented in the GSIS website, said he is ecstatic and grateful for the PWA award.

"The big deal about the GSIS website being popular is the fact that many people are appreciating our online services. When people especially our members appreciate our site, we know many people are benefiting from it. It's the best recognition there is," Garcia said.

Garcia attributed the popularity of the GSIS website to its numerous innovative programs that utilize the internet. For one, by simply visiting the GSIS site, members can check the updated records of their individual



accounts such as premium payments, records of creditable service, life insurance policy data, among others. GSIS members can even apply for a one-time P5,000 cash advance over the Net, the proceeds of which are disbursed directly to their eCards under the state pension fund's eGranting system.

The GSIS eGranting system is also a first, being the only loan program offered by a government financial institution (GFI) where the borrower can apply and consequently obtain loan proceeds without going to any GSIS office.

Prior to the People's Choice award, the GSIS website also holds the distinction of being the most popular Philippine government website in terms of reach and page views, according to top40.cebuh-online.com, a site which comes up with daily updates on the most visited Philippine websites.

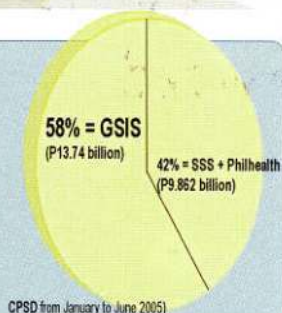
In fact, as of November 29, gsis.gov.ph ranked 18th in the list of the most visited Philippine sites, based on average Internet traffic for the last three months. The GSIS website is the only Philippine government

Practical reforms boost GSIS position as top GOCC

The Department of Finance (DOF) data on the consolidated public sector deficit (CPSD) said the GSIS surplus for the first half of the current year significantly offset the negative cash position not only of other government-owned and -controlled corporations (GOCCs) but also of the national government.

The January to June 2005 CPSD showed that P23.566 billion in surpluses were chipped in by the GSIS, the Social Security System, and PhilHealth. The GSIS contributed P13.74 billion or about 58 percent of the three GOCCs' combined surpluses.

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The GSIS' P13.74 billion surplus for the first semester has exceeded by P5.1 billion the P8.607 billion projected cash flow surplus of the state pension fund for the period.

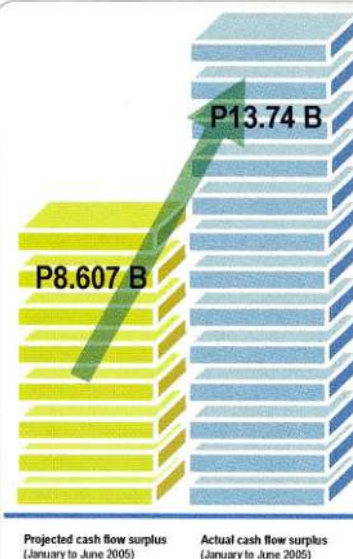
The emergence of GSIS as the best performing GOCC is largely due to the reforms initiated by PGM Winston F. Garcia to plug loopholes that were previously draining the funds of government employees.

These reforms include prudent spending and the implementation of such programs as the Premium-Based Policy and the Claims and Loans Interdependency Policy (CLIP).

The Premium-Based Policy, in a nutshell, is the granting of benefits and privileges to members based on the actual and correct premiums the GSIS receives from its members. The CLIP, on the other hand, cross defaults the members' outstanding dues.

The strong fiscal position of the GSIS and other GOCCs complemented the improved cash position of the national government, which, according to the CPSD data managed to reduce by almost 60 percent its budget deficit.

The government registered a deficit of P94.229 billion in the first six months of 2004. But due, among others, to its cost-saving measures, the country's budget deficit now stands at only P41.619 billion.



Founding Anniversary Celebration

The Social Security System (SSS) celebrated its 48th Anniversary on September 1, 2005, with the theme "SSS: Serving the Filipino at Home and Around the World". This is consistent with its corporate mandate and vision to develop and promote a viable and equitable social security protection through world class service for Filipino nationals working at home and abroad. Through the establishment of branches locally and overseas, the SSS is able to reach out to members and make itself accessible to their needs. Likewise, the establishment of bilateral social security agreements with other countries that hosts overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) is another avenue pursued by SSS to ensure that they are accorded equal treatment and entitlement to social security protection and benefits enjoyed by the nationals of these countries.

Bilateral Social Security Negotiation

The "Agreement on Social Security between the Republic of the Philippines and the Republic of Korea" was formally signed in Manila on December 15, 2005, during the State Visit of Korean President Roh Moo-hyun. The Agreement, first ever bilateral social security agreement concluded with an Asian country provides, among others, equality of treatment of nationals of the Contracting States (Filipinos and Koreans), under Philippine and Korea social security legislation. It also allows totalization of contributions to qualify for social security benefits, exportation of pension benefit to the place of residence, and promotion of mutual cooperation and assistance between social security institutions.

Visit by Officials from the Kingdom of Bhutan

Officials from the Ministry of Labor and Human Resources of the Kingdom of Bhutan, Mr. Tenzin Lekphell (Chief Labor Officer) and Mr. Ugyen Wangchuk (Labor Officer), visited the Philippine Social Security System (SSS) and met with SSS officials headed by Mr. Horacio T. Templo (Executive Vice President and Chief Actuary) on 05 July 2005 for a brief study of SSS' programs, processes and practices. The Bhutan officials were given a guided tour of the Member Assistance Center and the digitized I.D. Production Center.

Court Finds Employer Guilty of Violation of SS/EC Law

For failing to timely remit SSS premiums and Employees' Compensation (EC) contribution payments of her employees, an employer was found guilty for violation of the SS and EC laws by a Philippine Regional Trial Court.

The court ordered the employer to pay the unremitted SS and EC contributions, plus interests and penalties, and impose a prison term of two (2) years, 11 months and 11 days to four (4) years and two months.

Based on evidence submitted to the court, the employer after deducting from the employees' wages the corresponding amount for SS and EC contributions, did not make any remittance to the SSS, in clear violation of the employer's responsibility under the law.

Annual Confirmation of Pensioners (ACOP)

To ensure the payment of the accurate amount of benefits to the rightful pensioner, the SSS has launched the Annual Confirmation of Pensioners program or ACOP. Written notices are sent to pensioners, both residing in the Philippines and abroad, advising them to proceed to the nearest SSS branch or office for identification. Pensioners residing abroad may also go to the Philippine Embassy or Consulate, or the counterpart social security institution of countries with bilateral social security agreement with the Philippines. Failure to do so would result to the temporary suspension of benefit payment until such time the pensioner complies with the requirements.

WINNING SINGAPORE'S TOP PUBLIC SERVICE AWARD

The Central Provident Fund Board (CPF Board) created history when it became the first government agency in Singapore to clinch the Top Public Service (PS) Award. This is the pinnacle award for organizational excellence.

How did CPF Board achieve this accolade? In a nutshell, by winning the Singapore Quality Award, Innovation Class, Service Class, International Organization for Standardization (ISO) 9001:2000, and People Developer Standard.



Priscilla Koh, a senior executive at CPF Board, said, "CPF Board's drive to excel does not come easy; it is the combination of commitment, hard work by all with established systems and proven processes in place, that allows us to provide excellent service."

Indeed, CPF Board officers pride themselves in delivering good customer service. Everyone, from its 139 Customer Service Officers to the backroom staff, practises the well-articulated CPF lifestyle value of focusing on customers. The top management reviews feedback, compliments and complaints from CPF members every week.

To support and complement the efforts of the

officers, CPF Board has introduced many innovative initiatives to improve customer service over the years. For example, CPF members can access their CPF statements through biometric e-counters at CPF Board's offices, without having to remember their SingPass. And CPF Board recently rolled out two new initiatives to allow members to check their CPF balances using mobile phones or at island-wide self-service kiosks.

Innovation at CPF Board is not confined to improving customer service. Way back in 1995, CPF Board pioneered the use of cartoons to communicate policy changes. Many public agencies have since followed suit. Work Improvement Teams (WIT) and staff suggestions are a way of life in CPF Board, with CPF officers chalking up 4.5 WIT projects and 9 suggestions respectively a year, compared to 1.2 projects and 3.3 suggestions respectively in the public sector.

Achieving the Top PS Award is but part of CPF Board's continuous journey in enabling Singaporeans to save for a secure retirement. As articulated by CEO Mr Liew Heng San, "We are continually seeking better ways to help Singaporeans plan early to secure their retirement. What we do at CPF Board is ultimately guided by what is best for Singapore."

SSO allocates Bt 45 Million to assist workers in bird flu high risk areas



The Social Security Office (SSO) would allocate bt 45 million to buy Influenza vaccines for 150,000 people in high risk areas as part of efforts to prevent intermingling and mutation of human influenza and the H5N1 strain of bird flu.

Mr. Somsak Thepsuthin, Minister of Labour said during signing ceremony of the cooperation between the SSO and Department of Disease Control, Ministry of Public Health on bird flu prevention that the vaccinations were mainly aimed at more than 150,000 insured persons, employers and employees in poultry farms and slaughter houses who are at risk of contracting avian flu from their work. The SSO will pay for the vaccination and injection to the Department of Disease Control, Ministry of Public Health.

For the implementation, the SSO will inform the enterprises at risk through the Provincial Social Security Office and Area Offices throughout the country to launch the survey on the requirement for vaccination of insured persons and report the survey result. Then, the SSO will gather name list of those who intend to receive vaccination and send the information to Department of Disease Control. The Department will buy influenza vaccines and launch the injection for then. The vaccination costs 300 baht per injection.

It is the third time of the avian influenza outbreak in Thailand.

SSO increases more benefits: maternity, child allowance and dental care



The SSO launched actuarial calculation to find out possibility to increase more benefits according to the Minister's policy in part of child allowance, maternity and dental care.

Mr. Somsak Thepsuthin, Minister of Labour revealed that the result of actuarial calculation showed that the SSO could increase child allowance from 200 baht per month to 350 baht per/month to the insured person's children not more than 2 since they were born until 6 years old. The Minister would like to help the insured person to have more money to raise their children. The SSO has to spend 5,785-7,539 million baht per year on this matter.

In part of maternity benefit, the SSO will pay lump sum at 6,000 baht per one confinement. The new benefit will cover pre-natal care and post-natal care in condition that the insured persons have to deliver their babies in the registered hospital. In case where they don't want to go to the registered hospital, the SSO still pays 6,000 baht and the female insured person will receive cash benefit 50% of wages for 90 days.

Moreover, the Minister of Labour said that there would be good news for a new year. The SSO will provide unlimited dental care to the insured persons if they go to the registered hospital of their own.

"The SSO tries to increase quality of life for the insured persons without any impact to the stability of the Social Security Fund" Mr. Somsak said.

"The MOL hotline caravan"

Mr. Somsak Thepsutin, Minister of Labour released 85 Public Relations van to promote Ministry of Labour hotline 1506 throughout the country on the occasion of 15th year anniversary of SSO Thailand on 2 September 2005.

The MOL hotline 1506 started its service to facilitate customers who would like to receive various services from the Ministry of Labour "To inform employers, employees, insured persons, labour and other people about MOL hotline 1506 clearly and throughly, the MOL set up the project of MOL hotline caravan to disseminate information through the stickers on 85 vans. The vans will be accompanied by poverty allivation caravan project according to government policy". Mr. Somsak said.



The MOL hotline 1506 operates 120 telephone lines with interactive voice response (IVR). However, the customers can contact the officers directly on Monday to Friday during 7.30-19.00 hrs. and on Saturday, Sunday and public holidays during 8.30-16.30 hrs.

Mr. Somsak said that the MOL hotline 1506 would be convenient public relations media for employers, employees and the insured persons. He believed that it could alleivate sufferings of people and labour problems.

The Training Seminar on Call Centre Operations under MOU between FaCS Australia and the Mistry of Labour, Thailand



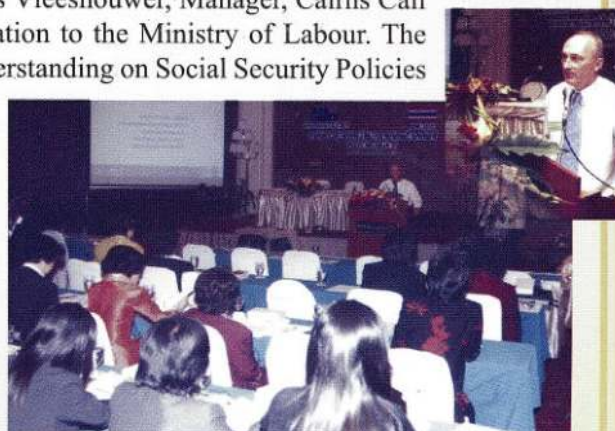
The Social Security Office, Ministry of Labour Thailand, in collaboration with FaCS and Centrelink Australia, arranged the training seminar on Call Centre Operations on 9 August 2005 at the Rama Gardens Hotel, Bangkok.

Mr. Charupong Ruangsuan, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Labour said in the occasions of the opening ceremony of the seminar that recently, the departments under Ministry of Labour had their own hotline for example, hotline 1506 of the Social Security Office, hotline 1694-1695 of the Department of Employment, hotline 1546 of Department of Labour Protection and Welfare etc. Therefore, it is hard for people to remember. In consideration that the SSO hotline is well-

known and convenient, the MOL will develop hotline 1506 of the SSO as the only one number of MOL that will provide information on Labour affairs to fill up the gap between public sector and Thai people.

The training seminar will serve the need of the Ministry in this matter, the Social Security Office received kind assistance from Department of Family and Community Services: FaCS, Australia and Centrelink to send Mr. Graham Maloney, National Manager Call Centre Operations and Mr. Kris Vleeshouwer, Manager, Cairns Call Centre to transfer knowledge on Centrelink Call Centres Operation to the Ministry of Labour. The training seminar is under the framework of Memorandum of Understanding on Social Security Policies and Programs between MOL and FaCS.

The training seminar is very successful. Sixty participants from the Ministry of Labour and the Social Security Office attended this seminar. The participants gained a lot of knowledge and had the opportuinties to share ideas and experiences on call centre operations from the lecturers. Although the training seminar was only 1 day, it is a fruitful one and has strengthened the bond among the SSO of Thailand, FaCS and Centrelink.



Newly passed Decree on Health Insurance in Vietnam

Due to rapid social-economic changes, hot issues arising from reality of delivery health care services and the public demands expanding benefit coverage for insured people, on 16 May 2005 the Government of Vietnam issued the decree 63/CP on health insurance to replace the existing Decree 58/CP. Major changes of this newly-issued Decree compared to the old one are as follows:

1. In the new decree, the Ministry of Health undertakes the governance roles of Health Insurance policy in Vietnam. Vietnam Social Security, an operational body is responsible for implementation of both social insurance and health insurance schemes.

2. Compulsory health insurance scheme expanded to following groups:

- Business establishments with one employee onward
- Grassroots kindergarten careers
- Grassroots active and retired administrative staff who are on benefit payments
- Relatives of personnel in the armed force
- Elderly people living in government hospices and nursing homes
- Elderly people over 90 years old
- The poor under poverty line
- War veterans and people of merit

For voluntary scheme, the health insurance card will be valid immediately on the date of issuing. People under this scheme do not have to wait until the card validated (previously the waiting period was 30 days)

3. Expansion of medical benefits

- Co-insurance no longer exists (in the past 20%)
- The poor and the people of merit are entitled to transportation concession in case of referral to higher levels of treatment.
- Treatment with high-tech such as artificial



joins, such as hip replacement, cataract surgery, heart valves, organ transplant including kidney and liver, spiral cord are covered by the health insurance fund (Ministry of Health is to provide a list of high tech services covered by the health insurance fund).

- Rehabilitation services are also available to insured patients
- Treatment of injuries caused by natural disasters
- Treatment of traffic accidents (previously covered by commercial insurance)
- Treatment of rabies
- HIV tests to serve diagnosis process

4. Payment methods

Vietnam Social Security can negotiate with registered health care providers to opt for one of the following payment methods: Fees for Services, Capitation or Diagnosis Related Group (DRG) instead of only fees for services method.

The new decree 63 ND-CP has come into effect since 1 July 2005. It is estimated that with this Decree, the health insurance coverage will be extended from 18 millions in 2004 to 35 millions in 2006 accounting for 42,5% of the country's population.

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