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**NON-RESIDENT PROGRAMS**

Brunei  
Laos  
Malaysia  
Maldives  
Pacific Islands  
People's Republic of China  
Singapore  
Vietnam

March 5, 1999

James Vigil, Jr.  
Special Assistant to the Assistant Secretary  
International Narcotics & Law Enforcement Affairs  
Department of State  
2201 C Street, N.W.  
Room 7334  
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear James:

We appreciated your offer to include information from non-governmental organizations in the conference report of the Vice President's Conference on Corruption, as discussed at the break-out session last Thursday.

If it is not too late, we would like to submit the enclosed description of the Foundation's governance and law programs for the report.

Thanks for your consideration.

Sincerely,

  
Rudi Jeung  
Assistant Director

enclosure a/s



# THE ASIA FOUNDATION

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*The Asia Foundation is a private, nonprofit, nongovernmental organization dedicated to advancing the mutual interests of the United States and the Asia Pacific region. Drawing on four decades of experience in Asia, The Asia Foundation collaborates with partners from the public and private sectors to support leadership and institutional development, exchanges and dialogue, technical assistance, research and policy engagement related to: governance and law, economic reform and development, women's political participation, and regional relations.*

## GOVERNANCE AND LAW PROGRAMS — 1998

The tremendous political, social, and economic upheaval in the Asia Pacific region brought on by the 1997 economic crisis dramatically illustrates the danger of allowing economic growth and liberalization to outstrip legal and governance reforms. Improved transparency, greater accountability, more participatory governance, and commitment to the rule of law all are essential if these countries are to recover and prosper anew.

Working in the critical area of governance and law, The Asia Foundation has long believed that fair and responsible government and an actively involved citizenry are the twin pillars of productive societies. Foundation programs, therefore, work toward positive change at both the national policy level as well as the grassroots level where people's lives are most affected.

At this crucial time, progress depends on consensus on the need for reform, and on heightened cooperation among government, the business community, non-governmental organizations, and citizens. With offices across Asia, the Foundation provides support to Asian institutions and organizations on a range of issues critical to the legal and governance reform process.

**ELECTION PROGRAMS** received Foundation support in Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, and Sri Lanka. Activities included voter education and registration, poll monitoring, election administration, and training for elected officials.

**LEGISLATIVE SYSTEMS** are an area of Foundation expertise. In Indonesia, the Foundation supported national and provincial parliaments in improving their formal law-making capacities. In Mongolia, Foundation funds supported the publication and distribution of transcripts of the Parliament's plenary sessions, marking the first time in Mongolian history that proceedings and representatives' votes were made public.

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT** is the level at which most citizens come in contact with the state. In 1998, Foundation support helped non-governmental organizations and activists in Bangladesh and Nepal play a

role in the drafting of local government codes. A Foundation-funded pilot program in Mongolia that brought together all segments of society to address problems of local development is being studied for application across the country. And in China, the Foundation supported the Ministry of Civil Affairs' pilot projects on urban neighborhood committee reform.

**COUNTERING CORRUPTION** is crucial to good governance and sustainable economic growth. Foundation-supported surveys in Bangladesh, Nepal, and the Philippines helped to identify problem areas of greatest concern to the public. In Thailand, the Foundation provided a grant to the Political Economy Center at Chulalongkorn University to research the trade and investment costs of corruption to the Thai economy and is assisting the development of an independent National Counter Corruption Commission, as mandated by the 1997 Constitution. The Foundation also supported efforts by the Philippines Center for Investigative Journalism to produce newspaper and television reports on corruption in the delivery of public services.

**NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS** in Japan, Nepal, and Mongolia benefitted from Foundation support to create a clear and more favorable legislative framework governing their activities. Of particular interest to the Foundation is financial sustainability in the nonprofit sector: in Thailand and the Philippines, the Foundation worked with local partners on strategies for financial self-sufficiency and fund raising techniques. As a founding member of the Asia Pacific Philanthropy Consortium, the Foundation supported an international conference on supporting the nonprofit sector in the wake of the economic crisis.

**RULE OF LAW** activities included support for China's effort to reform its administrative law, legal aid services in Indonesia and Vietnam, and public interest litigation in Bangladesh. In Sri Lanka, Foundation-supported court computerization helped clear a court backlog and provided better information on court cases to lawyers and litigants.

**HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANIZATIONS** in Asia received significant support from the Foundation on a country and regional level. In addition to supporting the National Human Rights Commission in Indonesia and leading non-governmental groups in Cambodia and Indonesia, the Foundation works to facilitate dialogue through a regional Working Group that addresses shared, trans-border issues such as migrant labor. The Foundation also helps encourage dialogue in Southeast Asia through a working group for the establishment of an ASEAN human rights mechanism.

**CONFLICT RESOLUTION** is a crucial means to give citizens access to justice. In Sri Lanka, Foundation support for mediation boards has helped reduce the burden on the court system and boosted confidence in the state's ability to adjudicate disputes. In Thailand, the Foundation assisted in developing a mediation model and establishing an Ombudsman's office.

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