

## IDRC President Re-affirms Commitment to Developmental Research in ASEAN

Mr. Ivan Head, the President of Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC) visited Thailand, Singapore and the Philippines during his recent trip to Asia in February.

His first stop in the ASEAN region was at Chiangmai, Thailand where he met with the researchers of two IDRC supported projects and visited their research sites to view the progress of research work related to vegetable seed production and passive cooling. Both the projects are closely tied in to the Royal Northern Project.

Prince Bhisadej Rajanee, Director of the Royal Project also met with Mr. Head at the Northern Royal Palace where he later presented Mr. Head to Their Majesties King Bhumiphol and Queen Sirikit.

Apart from the field trips he made in the north, Mr. Head's program in Thailand also included visits to other research projects undertaken by Thai

researchers in Bangkok and a seminar on "Canada and the World" which he gave to the Canadian Studies Group at Chulalongkorn University.

Mr. Head left Bangkok for Singapore on February 12. During his three-day stay in Singapore, the IDRC President called at the Institute of South East Asian Studies where he was briefed on the progress of two centre supported research projects. The first project deals with shipping conferences while the second examines non-tariff barriers to trade.

His visit to the country also provided Mr. Head with the opportunity of meeting with IDRC staff working in the Centre's Singapore-based Regional Office and discussing with them their work in the region. The recent opening of a sixth Regional Office in New Delhi to service South Asia has enabled staff in the IDRC Singapore office to concentrate their efforts on Southeast Asia, East Asia and

the Pacific.

The Philippines was the third ASEAN country to be visited by Mr. Head. His program in Manila included a meeting with Minister Jesus Tanchanco, Minister for Food to discuss the ASEAN Crops Post-Harvest Program initiated by IDRC six years ago and now supported by a consortium comprising of IDRC, CIDA, USAID, ADAB and the Dutch Government.

Three other appointments in the program took Mr. Head to Los Banos where he called at the University of Philippines, the International Rice Research Institute and the South East Asian Centre for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture. While in Los Banos, Mr. Head was also able to discuss the progress of an agricultural research project on intercropping which is a joint effort of the University of Philippines, the International Rice Research Institute and IDRC.

### Canada: Not tainted by colonial ventures

*Following is a reprint of an article which appeared in the Manila newspaper, Veritas. It was written by Ms. Melinda Quintos-de Jesus, one of the Filipino participants in the Canada-ASEAN Journalists' Visit Program.*

Philippine historical experience has been so inextricably bound with Canada's giant neighbor that the Filipino visiting Canada must first lift the clouds cast by the US on his perceptions. Filipinos have not been all that curious about Canada although the Philippines ranks as a primary source of Canadian immigration. Few links hold the two countries together. And in spite of her size, Canada's profile in this part of the world is overshadowed by the US, by Japan and even Australia.

It is a situation Canada is eager to change. A recent familiarization tour conducted by Canada's Department of External Affairs for ASEAN journalists articulated the conceptual themes underlying a strategy to further Canada's relations with the countries of the Asia Pacific region. For various reasons, among them, the population density and impressive growth rates that characterize countries of the region, Canada looks to this area for a wide range of new opportunities that can be explored for mutual benefit.

The label "Pacific rim" applies to that community of developed and developing countries on both sides of the Pacific which are held together in a web of interdependent forces and cooperative endeavors. The concept may have the ring of a popular slogan but there are indications that the idea runs deeply and commands a growing national advocacy in Canada.

In five major capitals of Canada-Vancouver, Calgary, Ottawa, Montreal and Toronto—the visiting journalists met with senior officers of major Canadian corporations seeking to expand trade and commerce in ASEAN countries. There is a growing sense that the world is moving into an Asian Pacific era in international affairs, a stage in which Canada seems set to play an important role.

While her population base is small and her political profile lacks definition, Canada would bring to this role three major elements that would bear significantly on regional development — an advanced technology, industrial expertise and skills, and a wealth of natural resources.

The multi-cultural base of Canada's population, representing a cross-section of all major nations in the Asian Pacific region would also enable Canada to reach out with greater understanding and appreciation of the different cultures and traditions of Asia, surely a requisite of any expansion of Canadian-Asian-ASEAN relations.

But certain national issues may also prove problematic. One obvious question is whether Canada can shift her focus from the emphasis historically given to Europe and the United States in her economic and cultural activities.

Another is the regional character of Canada. The diverse Eastern, Western and Central provinces must coalesce into a whole. The outward thrust must reflect rather than counter the process of Canada's national integration.

What mechanism will help Canada pursue these complex goals?

In Vancouver, British Columbia's port city and Canada's Western face, journalists were briefed on the proposal for an Asia Pacific Foundation. According to the project study prepared by John Bruk, the Foundation is envisioned as a collaborative venture supported by both government and private resources. It recommends "an independent, non-profit, non-political organization; that would be devoted . . . to the promotion of discussions and exchanges in areas of vital interest to the peoples of the Asia Pacific region; that would initiate, advance, and encourage a sustained program of study aimed at developing a more meaningful relationship between Canada and the countries of the Asia Pacific region based on mutual knowledge, appreciation and respect."

The idea of the Foundation was first advocated in 1980. And while there is evidence of a broad support for its immediate establishment, Canada's conservatism and characteristic diffidence may be holding back the initiative.

Ironically, it is Canada's low profile that could work to her advantage. Canada's image as a Western power has not been tainted by any colonial or imperialist ventures. She would be expected to wield a positive influence on the interplay of superpower forces in the region. As such, the Asia Pacific Foundation would be a welcome presence among Canada's Pacific neighbors.