



**International
Co-operative
Alliance**
Asia and Pacific

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Co-operative to Co-operative Trade, Kuala Lumpur

A two-day workshop was held in Kuala Lumpur on March 28 and 29 to explore opportunities for co-operative-to-co-operative (C2C) trade. The purpose of the workshop was to provide each organization a platform to advertise its business intent and top five cooperative products; enlighten participants on the development and solutions in C2C trade; and find trade opportunities and enhance their network within ICA-AP. 100 cooperators from 14 countries - India, China, Indonesia, Iran, Japan, Korea, Nepal, Malaysia, Maldives, Mongolia, Palestine, Sri Lanka, Vanuatu, and Vietnam - attended the workshop, presented their top five co-operative products and discussed opportunities in the business matching sessions. The top products were mainly agriculture related and in varying stages of value addition. Mr. Ridley Joseph, Director, Office of Registrar of Cooperatives and Business Development Services, Vanuatu who was participating in an ICA event for the first time said, "I am seeing for the first time products that we don't see. We usually throw away bones and skin, but here these have been converted to usable products. I see many opportunities for us to collaborate." Mr. Christopher Emille Jayanta of Kommunitas Orgnik Indonesia felt that the workshop provided the opportunity for his organization to have deeper engagement with cooperatives in

Malaysia where the focus is on developing health spas through cooperatives throughout the country. Speaking at the Welcome Dinner, Ms. Hajah Hawa Binti Mohammed Saleh, Deputy Executive Chairman of the Malaysia Co-operatives Societies Commission spoke about the Commission's commitment to enhance engagement of co-operatives in economic activities and in promoting trade.

Women's Day Celebration

The Karachi Co-operative Housing Societies Union (KCSHU) organized a carnival to mark International Women Day. The women wing of KCSHU visited all cooperative societies and invited members to participate in the event. Women from school and hospital cooperatives, directors of co-operative clubs and wives of men co-operators participated with full enthusiasm. There were 40 stalls set up where food products and clothing items made by the women were displayed. Youth from the cooperative were involved in making banners, setting up stalls, and organizing the music and dance competition. Over 300 women turned up at the carnival and displayed their talent in cooking, singing and dancing. At the end of the show, the head of the women wing and main organizer, Mrs. Errum Sharif Bhajji acknowledged the role played by the staff of school cooperatives and thanked the women for their active participation in celebrating Women's Day.

The National Cooperative Council of Sri Lanka (NCC) celebrated Co-operative Women's Day on 10 March in which Mr. Rishad Bathudeen, Minister of Commerce and Trade, the Board of Directors of NCC and over 200 women leaders participated. To mark the event, a seminar on "Pledge for Parity" and 'Planet 50-50 by 2030: Step It Up for Gender Equality' was held to discuss measures to enhance capacity of women. The women co-operators organized an exhibition to showcase their handicrafts and jewellery products

Thailand celebrates 100 years of cooperative movement

The Thailand Cooperative movement celebrates 100 years of its existence in 2016. The first cooperative, Wat Chan Cooperative Unlimited Liability, was established on February 26, 1916 as a village credit cooperative to help severely indebted farmers. The movement has grown over the years and now has close to 7,000 active cooperatives with around 18 million members in agriculture, fishery, thrift and credit, land settlement, consumer, services and credit unions. To mark the centenary, each month, different agencies such as the Cooperative Promotion Department (CPD), Cooperative Audit Department, Cooperative League of Thailand (CLT) and the seven national federations will organize an event.

On February 26, CPD hosted an event on the lawns of CLT, to pay tribute to H.H. Prince Bidyalongkarana, the Father of Thailand Cooperatives. In attendance were HRH Ratchanee Chamjaras, grandson of Prince Bidyalongkarana; Mrs. Borisuti Premprapan, Deputy Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives; and other dignitaries. A commemorative stamp honouring Prince Bidyalongkarana was released that day. The CLT will organize a Regional Seminar on "*Co-operatives: Building a Better World*," on July 2 and 3 to coincide with International

Cooperative Day.

International Co-operative Alliance signs civil society partnership agreement with European Commission

Representatives from the International Co-operative Alliance and the European Commission signed in Brussels a framework partnership agreement (FPA) for a global development program to benefit and advance the co-operative sector worldwide. The FPAs lay down terms for European Union support for Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), which are acknowledged to be pivotal actors of governance and key contributors to policy-making. Laying out long-term co-operation between the EU and civil society umbrella organizations, FPAs give CSOs the means to fill in this role. They are to cover areas such as social inclusion and economic empowerment, areas in which co-operatives play a fundamental role. The partnership agreement is to improve, among others, social inclusion and economic empowerment, areas in which co-operatives play a fundamental role. Titled “Co-operatives in development – people-centered businesses in action”, the programme is to run until 31 August 2020. More information can be found at: <http://ica.coop/en/media/news/international-co-operative-alliance-signs-civil-society-partnership-agreement-european>

National Co-operative Banking Conference, India

The National Federation of State Cooperative Banks (NAFSCOB) organised a two day conference from 20 March, on ‘*Recent trends in Short Term Cooperative Credit Structure*’ at the National Co-operative Union of India (NCUI), New Delhi. The two Alliance members, NAFSCOB and NCUI, were supported in this conference by the National Bank for Rural Development or NABARD which works closely with the Reserve Bank of India in determining several derivatives of the Indian rural economy including rural credit. The inaugural session was graced by Mr. Mohanbhai Kalyanji Kundariya, Minister of State for Agriculture; Dr. Chandrapal Singh Yadav, President, NCUI; Mr. Dileep Sanghani, Chairman, NAFSCOB; and Dr. Dinesh, CEO NCUI. Dr. Jean Louis Bancel, Chairperson, [International Co-operative Banking Association](#) and Alliance Board member, delivered the keynote address where he stressed on finding ways to renew the relationship between Indian co-operative banks and civil society to ensure the former’s sustainability. Dr. Bancel, who also chairs the [ICA Principles Committee](#), suggested that co-operatives must leverage India’s position at global financial platforms such as the G-20 and the BRICS and that, there must be a healthy influx of technology, even in co-operative banking, to support a billion dreams! Europe, he added, is continuing the consolidation drive through mergers and amalgamations among co-operatives as well as experimenting with the so called social banking, to face market competition. Mr. Bhima Subrahmanyam, MD, NAFSCOB delivered the conference recommendations

Biography of Alliance President Monique Leroux released

The newly released biography “Ma vie en mouvement” traces the journey of Monique Leroux from her musical beginnings to the world of finance and co-operatives. Having been the first woman to lead Desjardins Group, the sixth largest financial group in the world, Ms Monique Leroux continues on the path of co-operative leadership, heading the International Co-operative Alliance, whose members elected her as their new president in November 2015.

The biography, written in French and authored by Ms Leroux in collaboration with Benoit Gignac, is titled “Ma vie en mouvement”. While the literal translation would be “My life in motion”, the book focuses on her experience in the co-operative movement.

Ms Leroux discovered music at an early age – listening to Metropolitan Opera concerts on the radio was a family tradition – and she became an accomplished pianist. She believes her musical background has helped her in the finance sector, as in finance, a message and intention can be found behind the numbers, just as is possible with music, she explains in her biography.

She values her professional experience equally. Mrs Leroux was a member of an orchestra, a teacher, an accountant and administrator, an auditor and a lecturer. The book also touches upon her hobbies, such as cooking, cycling and gardening – and her life with husband Marc and daughter Anne-Sophie.

In 1988 Mrs Leroux became an associate at Ernst and Young, one of the big five accounting and consulting companies at that time. It was there that she first worked with Desjardins, who became a client of E&Y in 1994. She was already familiar with the essential role played by Desjardins in the development of the province of Quebec. She describes how at Desjardins she discovered a democratic enterprise based on co-operative values such as solidarity, common good and engagement, how she expanded the business and how she introduced innovative new concepts, such as the Desjardins Lab.

As president, chair of the board and chief executive officer of Desjardins, Monique Leroux says she felt like a conductor of an orchestra directing a music performance, but one that had started over one hundred years ago, by founder Mr. Alphonse Desjardins.

With Ms Leroux leaving Desjardins this month after having completed the maximum of two four-year terms, she will take her co-operative symphony further upwards, now to lead the global co-operative movement, in her role of president of the International Co-operative Alliance.

Monique Leroux’ biography “Ma vie en mouvement”, is available (in French) to order at <http://www.tcmédialivres.com/p/17/c/9/l/2307/ma-vie-en-mouvement>.

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UPCOMING EVENTS

1. Youth Summit September 20-24, 2016 Bali, Indonesia
2. Regional Assembly, New Delhi November 15-19, 2016
3. Quebec International Summit of Co-operatives, October 11-13, 2016
4. Workshop on Agricultural Cooperatives System in Korea; organized by ICA-NACF; April 25-29, 2016;
5. 16th ICA-AP Regional Workshop for Managers on, "Management of Consumer Co-operatives in Asia-Pacific" in Singapore, 31 May to 2 June 2016

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