

Asean Youth Friendship Camp for the Study of Cultural Heritage 6-20 March 1999, Thailand

The Office of the National Culture Commission held the ASEAN Youth Friendship Camp for the Study of Cultural Heritage from 6 to 20 March 1999. The Camp was attended by five delegates from each of nine ASEAN member countries, namely Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Lao PDR, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam.

The theme of the camp was archaeology in relation to art and environment. It was also meant to prepare youth to be acquainted with the people in the rural areas - to study their way of living, and to learn their arts and crafts which were handed down from generations.

During the Opening Ceremony at the Royal River Hotel, Bangkok, the Camp Director, Dr. Charnvit Kasetsiri welcomed delegates to the Camp. M.R. Chakrarot Chitrabongs (Deputy Secretary General of the National Culture Commission, Chairman of the



Working Group on Literary and ASEAN Studies, and Chairman of the Working Group on Visual and Performing Arts), on behalf of the Chairman of the ASEAN-COCI Thailand, delivered the opening address.

The Camp's activities included presentation of country papers, study visits, practical exercises and exchange of daily experiences. Other activities organised were Thai traditional dances, welcome and farewell parties during which all delegates were invited to present their cultural

performances.

Each delegation presented country report which focused on the cultural heritage of their own country through the forms of media such as slides, audio-visual, samples of artifacts and demonstration.

Study visits of selected historical, archaeological and cultural sites as well as handicrafts making were

arranged in Bangkok, Ayutthaya, Sukhothai, Chiang Rai and Chiang Mai (the Temple of the Emerald Buddha, Ayutthaya Historical Study Centre, Ayutthaya Historical Park, the ancient city of Sukhothai, Mr. Thawan Dachanee's residence, Doi Tung Palace and Wat Phra That Doi Suthep etc.).



Practical exercises of selected handicraft-making were arranged for the participants at Ayutthaya, Sukhothai and Chiang Mai provinces. The participants were guided to share experiences within 3 areas, i.e.

- i) The reason for choosing the craft;
- ii) The similarities and differences of the work in comparison to participant's country; and
- iii) The recommendations made for preserving the craft.

In Ayutthaya, participants and leaders of the delegations were divided into four groups to practise the crafts of fish mobiles, musical instruments, classical dance masks and artificial flowers. Each group comprised one participant from each country and at least two country leaders in the group.

In Sukhothai, the participants observed the making of three kinds of handicrafts, i.e. traditional goldsmith, textile weaving and pottery. Divided into 3 groups according to their interests, the participants held discussion sessions to share their views and ideas.

In Chiang Mai, the participants and country leaders were divided into four groups in the same way as at two previous provinces. They practiced the crafts of



lacquerware, silversmith, wood carving and umbrella making, respectively.

At the Closing Ceremony (Lotus Hotel,

Pang Suan Kaew, Chiang Mai), M.R. Chakrarat Chitrabongs, Deputy-Secretary General of the National Culture Commission, presided over the occasion and presented souvenirs to the Camp Director, and Leader of each delegation, followed by an exchange of souvenirs between the delegations. Each member country presented a 10-15 minute cultural performance, following which the special award and certificates were presented by the Camp Director.

Before the camp was officially closed, an evaluation session was held. It was attended by the Camp Director, Heads of the Delegations and the Secretariat. The delegations strongly agreed the camp was fully successful and recommended that it be organised again.

- Khunying Maenmas Chavalit