

## ASEAN STUDENTS' INDIA TOUR 2009

Late last month Mr. Yi Longdy, a member in the Executive Committee of the Outstanding Youth Group of Cambodia, got a privileged opportunity being appointed by the Department of Youth of the Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sports as one of the five Cambodian youth to go join in a 12-day tour in India—a program financially supported by the Ministry of Internal Affairs of India to boost better understanding about culture, technology, and societies of India among ASEAN students.

It all started with 50 students from 10 ASEAN countries, after having been selected by people in authority in their respective countries, landing in Chennai, the fourth largest metropolitan area of India. Then, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Visit of ASEAN Students in India officially began, to end 12 days later in New Delhi, the capital city of India, on April 2, 2009.

In Chennai, the starting point of the 12-day visit, the students were given chance to get a glimpse of the advanced technology and of the massive development of the country with the second highest in population and the 4<sup>th</sup> biggest in its gross domestic product. They were introduced to places of various kinds, including the National Institute of Fashion Technology, one of the top institutes having produced many renowned people in the industry of fashion and design. The students also got chance to taste the rich culture of India through their visits to Dakshina Chitra, as well as the shore temple at Mahabalipuram UNESCO World Heritage site.

The 4<sup>th</sup> day of the program was in another city, Hyderabad. Visits to the India Business School, the world-class graduate school of business in India, to ITEC City, the place where advanced technology and hi-tech management prevails, to the Confederation of India Industry Office of Green Business Centre, and to the Human Resource Development Centre, where trainings for civil servants of the government are officially provided, were made during the students' stay in Hyderabad.

Next destination of the tour was set in the most important financial city of India, Mumbai. With a population of about 90 million people, Mumbai, also known as Bombay, is home to many big commercial enterprises, famous educational institutions, and top talents. Meetings with important people of the TATA International Ltd, the Bombay Stock Exchange Ltd, and the Larsen & Toubro Ltd showed the students distinctly how tremendous and successful industries and businesses in India really are. They are huge, capable of managing, with impressive technology, a wide range of productions, producing from some of the cheapest cars in the world to hi-tech trains. Top schools, such as St. Xavier's College, one of the top 5 colleges in India, and the Indian Institute of Technology, the top-ranking school of technology and engineering only after MIT, are also welcomingly introduced to and toured by the students.

Day 7 and day 8 of the program were all in the capital city of India, Delhi. With guides telling about various stories about this city, a great deal of time was spent in the bus going from places to places, from places such as Samtel Color Ltd and the National Rail Museum to places of cultural attraction and values such as the Gate of India, the biggest Mosque in Old Delhi, the tomb of Gandhi, the world heritage monument Humayun's Tomb, and the Mena Tower. In addition to touring around tourist sites, one pivotal activity during the stay in Delhi was for the students from each ASEAN country to do a brief presentation about their own respective nations, the occasion in which Cambodian students won the 3<sup>rd</sup> prize for best

presentation of the night.

The remaining days of the program were mostly spent in the cities of Agra and Jaipur for the students to get better image of how rich India is in its culture having been preserved over its thousands-of-year history, which were made through special visits to some of the most amazing places and temples, such as the Fatehpur Sikri Royal Palace and Tomb of Sufi Saint Salim Chisti, Agra Fort, and, of course, the incredible Taj Mahal, one of the world's most-recently voted 7 wonders. In Jaipur, the participants of the program were also led to experience and get closer looks at, for instance, Indian dances, handcrafted products, saris, camel and elephant rides, just to name a few.

All in all, although sounding more or less like simple pay tour, the experience the students have received from the program has gone far beyond that purpose. Apart from everlasting memories and friendship nurtured and grown out of open interactions in all wonderful, fun and, once in a while, hard times, for people from developing countries like Cambodia, encountering with traces of development, from highly capable individuals to outstanding technologies, brought about fresh inspirations, not only for the participants themselves but also for other young Cambodians to whom the stories of the journey and the experience are shared. Such motivation—motivation to build and see similar or even better improvements in Cambodia—is one of the factors that are highly needed for the sustainable development of the current and future Cambodia.