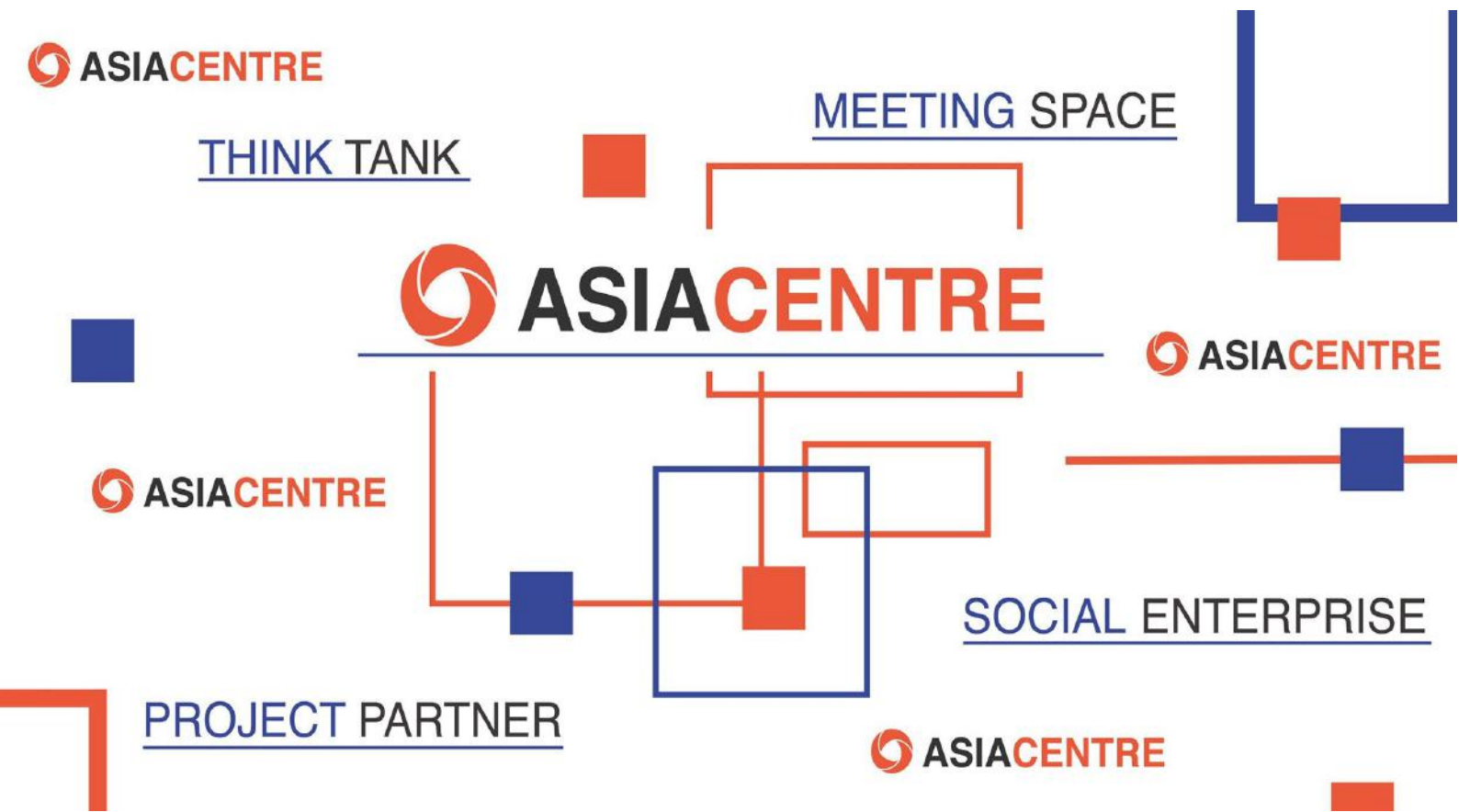


ASIA CENTRE

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VOL 3 | 2017

ACTIVITIES REPORT



HUMAN RIGHTS

EDUCATION

INTELLECTUAL
EXCHANGE

ABOUT ASIA CENTRE

Asia Centre is a social enterprise that seeks to improve the lives of people in the region through innovative and collaborative partnerships. It serves as think tank, meeting space, project partner.

- **Think Tank**

Evidence based research on regional affairs by experts with decades of experience in research, international development cooperation and advocacy.

- **Meeting Space**

Affordable, well-equipped, flexible boutique meeting space in Central Bangkok.
Special rates for NGOs and non-profits.

- **Project Partner**

Collaborate with partners to develop, implement and extend the outreach of projects.

- **Social Enterprise**

Innovative social enterprise serving the community.

2017 HIGHLIGHTS

- Convened the *International Conference on National Human Rights Institutions in Southeast Asia: Challenges of Protection*
- Joined the Anti-Death Penalty Asia Network (ADPAN).
- Collaborated with International Panel of Parliamentarians for Freedom of Religion on a report on the state of freedom of religion in the region.
- Published the first analysis of the stakeholder engagement with the UPR -*The Universal Periodic Review of Southeast Asia: Civil Society Perspectives*.
- Hosted UN Special Rapporteurs Mr Michel Forst (situation of human rights defenders) and Ms Cecilia Jimenez-Damary (human rights of internally displaced persons).



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REFINING THE ASIA CENTRE BRAND

2017 saw the Centre revamping its logo and tagline to better articulate the objectives and vision of the organisation.





HUMAN RIGHTS PROGRAMME

Creating a Safe and Independent Platform for Discourse



In 2017 Asia Centre convened various conferences, seminars and workshops to discuss human rights issues affecting the region. These events covered a variety of topics including the impact of UPR of the Human Rights Council on human rights in Southeast Asia, Japan-ASEAN engagement on business and human rights, the access to justice, the role of National Human Rights Institutions in protecting human rights, and the humanitarian crisis affecting the Rohingya people in Myanmar.

Through these events Asia Centre brought together numerous stakeholders from different backgrounds – including representatives from civil society, academia, and youth as well as international, regional and national organizations – to engage and exchange best practices on the critical human rights issues impacting the region.

BENEDICT ANDERSON 1ST ANNIVERSARY MEMORIAL ROUNDTABLE: NATIONALISM, CITIZENSHIP AND STATELESSNESS

Benedict Anderson 1st Anniversary Memorial Roundtable was a tribute to the life and legacy of the late professor. Centering on the topic *Nationalism, Citizenship and Statelessness: Current Issues and Developments in Asia*, the discussion attracted an audience of some 65 people, and featured a panel of diverse expertise. This event followed our inaugural memorial Debating Imagined Communities: A Tribute to Benedict Anderson held on 30 January 2016, and will be an annual feature in the Asia Centre calendar.



PUBLIC LECTURE BY UN SPECIAL RAPPOREUR FOR THE SITUATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS



States no longer are the only violators of human right standards. Around the world violations against human rights defenders (HRDs) are also being committed by companies in the areas of mining and forestry as well as other sectors. This was one of the key trends affecting the situation of HRDs according to UN Special Rapporteur, Mr. Michel Forst during his public lecture at Asia Centre. Over 70 people turned up to hear Mr. Forst including participants from academia, civil society, the UN, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

(Thailand) as well as Thai Human Rights Commissioner Mrs. Angkhana Neelapaijit. The lecture was co-convened with Forum Asia



BUSINESS AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN JAPAN-ASEAN RELATIONS IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Asia Centre's roundtable discussion on Japan-ASEAN relations revealed that Japan needed to develop a human rights dimension to its foreign policy with Southeast Asian countries in order to distinguish itself from other major Asian powers, such as China and India, who also are increasingly engaging with the region. The adoption of a human rights dimension to Japan-ASEAN economic and business relationship can provide greater traction for Japan in this regional political economy. Asia Centre aims to explore further the theme of business and human rights through its July 2018 international conference on business and human rights in Asia, its policy papers and in future roundtable discussions.



AMBASSADOR OF BANGLADESH HIGHLIGHTS ROHINGYA CRISIS IN HUMAN RIGHTS DIALOGUE AT ASIA CENTRE

The desperate plight of the Rohingya people in Myanmar was raised by the Ambassador of Bangladesh, H.E. Ms. Saida Muna Tasneem during an address at Asia Centre to youth from South Asia and Thailand. She emphasized that it was youth activism for human rights in other parts of the world, notably young people in Southern United States in the 1940s and 1950s, whose courage

led to the greatest advances in human rights in that country. This was critical in the context of international and regional political mechanisms that appear to be ineffective in responding to crimes against humanity, despite the nascent 'responsibility to protect' doctrine.



INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON NATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS INSTITUTIONS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA: CHALLENGES OF PROTECTION

An effective national human rights institution (NHRI) requires a creative, purposive interpretation of their mandates and a proactive approach to implementation. This was one of the key takeaways from Asia Centre's *International Conference on National Human Rights Institutions in Southeast Asia: Challenges of Protection* held on 13 and 14 July at the Centre's premises in Bangkok, Thailand. The conference brought together a diverse group of participants

including representatives from the United Nations, NHRIs and civil society, for critical discourse into the effectiveness of the regions NHRIs. The conference also featured the UN Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons, Ms. Cecilia Jimenez-Damary who will be presenting a report to the UN on NHRIs and displacement.

Cecilia
Jimenez-Damary,
UN Special Rapporteur on
the Human Rights of
Internally Displaced
Persons

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON NHRIS IN
SOUTHEAST ASIA: CHALLENGES OF PROTECTION

"Asia Centre has managed to gather an amazing group of academics, practitioners and NHRI people focusing on NHRIs and protection. I will go away with many learnings from different perspectives. This will help me in my UN report on displacement and NHRIs"



CONTINUED ENGAGEMENT ON THE UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW OF SOUTHEAST ASIA

THE UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW OF SOUTHEAST ASIA

CIVIL SOCIETY PERSPECTIVES

EDITED BY
James Gomez and Robin Ramcharan



Forthcoming in 2018
For inquiries and orders please contact
info@asiacentre.co.th



The Universal Periodic Review of Southeast Asia: Civil Society Perspectives, Asia Centre's inaugural publication outlines stakeholder engagement with the UPR. Published with Palgrave Macmillan and regional publisher Gerakbudaya, the book represents the first evidence-based review of the impact of the UPR on human rights in the region.

Research & Publications



Asia Centre in collaboration with the International Panel of Parliamentarians for Freedom of Religion or Belief (IPPFoRB) examined the state of freedom of religion or belief (FoRB) in Southeast Asia. The research revealed that religious freedom appears to be regressing. It also uncovered an array of challenges including rise of religious-based intolerance, discrimination against minorities and indigenous peoples, the securitization of FoRB in the context of fighting terrorism and the dire need to uphold international human rights standards in this overall context

ASIA CENTRE & IPPFORB
FREEDOM OF OR BELIEF UNDER THREAT IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

EDUCATION PROGRAMME

Asia Centre has been active in education and training on human rights in ASEAN. In 2017 we delivered a series of lectures and facilitated interactive discussions with students from Sam Nunn School of International Affairs of Georgia Tech, Rajamangala University of Technology Phra Nakhon, Stenden University Thailand and Fudan University.

Education and Capacity Building



In addition, the Centre also conducted briefings on the UPR of Southeast Asia. Centre Advisor Dr James Gomez conducted a public lecture at Saw Swee Hock Southeast Asia Centre, London School of Economics and Political Science, on the topic *Civil Society and Shrinking Political Space: the future of human rights in Southeast Asia*.

Civil society needs to be innovative if it wants to step up to the challenges of shrinking space for activism



INTELLECTUAL EXCHANGE PROGRAMME



The Intellectual Exchange Programme (IEP) convenes activities that aim to identify problems and seek solutions to cultural, economic, legal, political and social issues impacting Southeast Asia and the wider Asia-Pacific community, through interdisciplinary dialogue and collaborative partnerships.

Ambassador Roundtables

RUSSIAN GRAND STRATEGY AND THE ASIA PACIFIC: WHAT ROLE FOR ASEAN?

A rare public articulation of Russia's grand strategy in the Asia-Pacific was expounded at Asia Centre by H.E. Kirill Barsky, Ambassador of the Russian Federation to the Kingdom of Thailand on 30 March 2017. Entitled *Russian Grand Strategy in the Asia Pacific: What Role for ASEAN?*, Asia Centre convened the roundtable to discuss Russia's dramatic resurgence in international politics and explore its foreign policy goals in the region.



BANDUNG REVISITED: AFRICA-ASIA RELATIONS IN THE 21ST CENTURY

H.E Ambassador Geoff Doidge, Embassy of Republic of South Africa to the Kingdom of Thailand, called for Africa and Asia to rekindle the Bandung spirit of mutual cooperation and peaceful coexistence in addressing contemporary development and security challenges. The roundtable discussion attracted a diverse audience, including members of the African diaspora in Thailand.



International Faculty Club

The International Faculty Club (IFC) brings together academics, researchers and graduate students living, researching, studying, working, or passing through Bangkok, Thailand, to share their research interests, exchange views and explore avenues for partnering on projects.



CONNECT CONVERSE COLLABORATE



PARTNERSHIPS & COMMUNITY BUILDING

ASIA CENTRE JOINS ADPAN

On the occasion of the 15th World Anti-Death Penalty Day on October 10, 2017, Asia Centre joined the Anti Death Penalty Asia Network (ADPAN). This builds on the Centre's existing work on regional human rights issues and mechanisms, including on the death penalty.

ANTI
DEATH
PENALTY
ASIA
NETWORK

ATTRACTING NEW TALENT

In 2017, Asia Centre added to its lineup of Board Members and Centre Associates, bringing in experts on human rights, international law and media and journalism. The Centre also continues to attract a steady stream of interns and volunteers.



DEEPENING TIES ONLINE & OFFLINE

The Asia Centre community continues to grow both online and offline, with the Centre providing a much needed safe and independent space for discourse.



2750 followers



2530 subscribers



260 followers



41 followers

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