

Report of the ICAPP Mission to India (July 11-12, 2014)

The ICAPP mission, composed of Hon. Chung Eui-yong, Co-Chairman of the Standing Committee and Secretary General, Hon. Sujata Koirala, Head of International Department of the Nepali Congress Party, Hon. Sous Yara, Vice Chairman of Foreign Affairs Commission of the Cambodian People's Party and Hon. Daya D.K. Gamage, National Organizer of the United National Party of Sri Lanka, visited India during July 11-12, 2014, and had meetings with leaders of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Indian National Congress to discuss future cooperation between the ICAPP and political parties in India.

The list and the program of the mission are attached as *Appendixes I and II*.

1. Meeting with Leaders of the Bharatiya Janata Party

The meeting with senior leaders of the BJP was held at the BJP Central Office in the morning of July 12. The meeting was attended by Hon. Ram Lal, National General Secretary, Hon. Vijay Jolly, Convenor BJP Oversea Affairs, Hon. Pinky Anand, National Executive Member and Additional Solicitor General of the Indian Government, and several other senior leaders of the BJP.

The ICAPP mission extended, on behalf of the ICAPP Standing Committee, their congratulations on the formation of the new government in India under the leadership of H.E. Prime Minister Narendra Modi. They also expressed their sincere wish for the successful implementation of the policies of the new government, which had been just announced in the new budget bill submitted on July 10. Hon. Amit Shah was named as new President of the BJP in the previous day, replacing Hon. Shri. Rajnath Singh, and couldn't attend the meeting due to his son's wedding in Gujarat, but conveyed his warm welcome to the ICAPP Mission through Hon. Ram Lal.

The ICAPP mission also presented the formal invitation addressed to Prime Minister Modi, on behalf of H.E. President Mahinda Rajapaksa of Sri Lanka, to attend the opening ceremony of the 8th General Assembly (GA) of the ICAPP and deliver his keynote speech on September 19. The ICAPP mission stressed that the 8th GA would be co-hosted by the Sri Lanka Freedom Party and the United National Party. The BJP leaders thanked for the invitation and said they would duly convey the letter to the Prime Minister. The BJP also confirmed their willingness to send a high-level delegation to the 8th GA.

The ICAPP mission expressed their hope that the membership of India in the ICAPP Standing Committee would be shared by the governing BJP and the opposition Indian National Congress like nine other members in the Standing Committee, i.e. Bangladesh, Cambodia, Japan, Korea, Lebanon, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal and Thailand. The BJP leaders welcomed the proposal and said they would duly consult with the Indian National Congress on how to share the membership.

In this regard, the ICAPP mission expressed their hope that the 24th Meeting of the ICAPP Standing Committee would be held in New Delhi during the first half of 2015. They further suggested that the SC meeting could be co-hosted by both the BJP and the Indian National Congress, like the 8th GA to be held in Sri Lanka. The BJP responded positively to this

request, and said that they would have consultations both within the BJP and also with the Indian National Congress.

The ICAPP mission also expressed their hope that the 2nd ICAPP Workshop on Human Trafficking would be held in New Delhi in mid January next year, and tentatively suggested January 22-25, 2015 as dates for the workshop, in the same manner as the SC meeting. The ICAPP mission further informed that the ICAPP Secretariat was willing to arrange to provide financial assistance, if necessary, to cover the expenses for hosting the workshop from development cooperation agencies like KOICA of Korea and TIKA of Turkey as they did for the 1st workshop which was held in Kathmandu last January under the co-sponsorship of five political parties in Nepal. The BJP responded positively to this proposal and again said that it would have consultations within the BJP and with the Indian National Congress.

The ICAPP mission also requested the BJP to recommend the Indian government to sign the inter-governmental Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to provide support for the ICAPP activities which was first signed in July 2013. They informed that eight governments, i.e. Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, Iran, Korea, Sri Lanka and Vietnam, have so far signed the MOU, and several other governments are now taking domestic procedures to sign the MOU, including Kazakhstan, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines and Turkey. The BJP responded positively to this request and said they would immediately send their recommendation to their government to sign the MOU.

The ICAPP mission also requested the BJP to recommend to their government to support the ICAPP's initiative to obtain observer status in the U.N. General Assembly, and expressed their hope that the Indian government would join seven other governments, i.e. Cambodia, Japan, Nepal, Korea, Pakistan, Philippines and Sri Lanka, as a co-sponsor of the draft resolution to invite the ICAPP as an observer to the U.N. General Assembly. The BJP also responded positively to this request and said they would duly submit their recommendation to the government.

2. Meeting with Leaders of the Indian National Congress

The meeting with senior leaders of the Indian National Congress took place in the All India Congress Committee in the afternoon of July 12. The meeting was attended by Hon. Dr. Karan Singh, Deputy Leader of the Party, Hon. Dr. Shashi Tharoor, Former Minister of Foreign Affairs, and Hon. Anil K. Shastri, Special Invitee of the Congress Working Committee.

The ICAPP mission expressed their gratitude to the great contributions the Indian National Congress to the ICAPP as one of the leading members of the Standing Committee and requested its continued support for, and participation in, the ICAPP activities. Dr. Singh warmly welcomed the ICAPP mission and expressed his appreciation of the achievements the ICAPP has made in promoting friendship and understanding among political parties in Asia.

The leaders of the Indian National Congress were also very positive to the proposals made by the ICAPP mission on future participation in the ICAPP Standing Committee together with the BJP, and holding the 24th SC Meeting and the 2nd ICAPP workshop on human trafficking in New Delhi in early next year. They said they would closely coordinate and cooperate with the BJP on the issues.

In this regard, the leaders of the Indian National Congress pointed out that the term “Alternate Member” in the Standing Committee might suggest diminishing status or role for the relevant political party in the activities of the Standing Committee, and proposed to find a way that two principal political parties from each country, where applicable, would be encouraged to share the membership in the Standing Committee on the basis of equal status.

The leaders of the Indian National Congress confirmed their continued commitment to support the activities of the ICAPP, and expressed in particular their willingness to provide possible assistance to get the support of the Indian government for ICAPP’s initiatives, such as signing the inter-governmental MOU and co-sponsoring the draft resolution in the U.N. General Assembly.

3. Follow-up Meetings with Representatives of Both Parties

The ICAPP Mission also had a dinner at the Korean Embassy in New Delhi in the evening of July 12 and had follow-up discussions. The dinner attended by Hon. Vijay Jolly, Global Convenor BJP Overseas Affairs, and Hon. Pinky Anand, National Executive Member from the BJP, and Hon. Anil K. Shastri, Special Invitee of the Congress Working Committee of the Indian National Congress.

The following points have been tentatively agreed at the meeting.

- The BJP and the Indian National Congress Party will share the membership in the ICAPP Standing Committee as members with equal status.
- The BJP will consider hosting the 2nd ICAPP Workshop on Human Trafficking during January 22-25, 2015, while the Indian National Congress Party will consider hosting the 24th Meeting of the ICAPP Standing Committee during the first half of 2015.
- Both the BJP and the Indian National Congress will send high-level delegations to the 8th General Assembly to be held in Sri Lanka during September 18-21, 2014.
- Both the BJP and the Indian National Congress will support the ICAPP’s initiatives, in particular, signing the inter-governmental MOU and co-sponsoring the draft resolution in the U.N. General Assembly.

Appendixes:

I. List of the ICAPP Mission

II. Program of the ICAPP Mission