

## **Reforming Political Financing in Malaysia: Sarawak Region Workshop (Kuching)**

The sixth and final workshop of Transparency International – Malaysia's Nationwide Campaign on Reforming Political Financing in Malaysia was held on 19 March 2011 in Harbour View Hotel, Kuching. The workshop was part of the *Crinis* project funded by the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

The workshop was aimed at encouraging free and frank discussion and exchange of ideas on the effort to create a level playing field in political financing. TI-M hoped to mobilise public support for reforming political financing in Malaysia, inculcating values of transparency, integrity and accountability. The forum was also meant to disseminate information, as well as educating the public on political corruption and money politics. Additionally, the workshop would help TI-M to make inroads into East Malaysia for further research and events.

The panelists for the workshop were Datuk Wira Wan Ahmad Wan Omar, Deputy Chairman of Election Commission of Malaysia, Professor Datuk Mohamad Ali Hasan, Deputy President of TI-M, Colonel (R) Shaharudin Othman, Deputy Chairman of Malaysians for Free and Fair Election (MAFREEL), Associate Professor Dr Andrew Aeria from University Malaysia Sarawak, and Dr Wong Chin Huat, lecturer of Monash University. Mr Alan Kirupakaran, Executive Director of TI-M moderated the discussion.

The forum was the first attempt by TI-M to engage with local residents in Sarawak and to get the reform message to the state. Many participants thanked TI-M for organising an event of such nature which allowed them to openly share their experience and knowledge with regards to money politics and political corruption in the state. Some participants even urged TI-M to localise the effort of reforming political financing by spreading the message to the indigenous people residing in rural area. Some participants volunteered to cooperate with and help TI-M to achieve that objective. The recommendations proposed by the TI-M were well received by the participants. Additionally, the participants requested that TI-M to set up a local branch to facilitate the effort on combating corruption in the state.

A total of 31 participants attended the forum, including representatives from various political parties, academics, NGOs, and members of the public. The event was covered by The Star, Borneo Post and See Hua Daily News.