

Roundtable on Institutional and Legislative Reforms on Political Financing in Malaysia

A roundtable on “Institutional and Legislative Reforms on Political Financing in Malaysia” was organised on 8 February 2010 with the support from the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung.

The key objective of the Roundtable was to debate the proposed recommendations for reforms on political financing in Malaysia. TI-M had undertaken research on the state of political financing in Malaysia as well as a review of election laws in the country. The draft of the proposed recommendations was presented at the Roundtable to gain insights, feedback, comments and recommendations from various sectors, such as politicians, academicians, civil society organisation, and policy makers. Professor Yoon, Jongbin from South Korea, who was a speaker for the event shared the experiences of South Korea in reforming political financing in that country.

The roundtable was well attended with a total of 40 participants from various sectors. They included Members of Parliament, representatives from the Pemandu, Malaysia Anti-Corruption Commission, politicians and academia. The TI-M President, Datuk Paul Low Seng Kuan opened the Roundtable.

The Roundtable raised important issues related to the reforms proposed by TI-M. The participants agreed in principle that immediate reforms are needed to address the problem of political corruption. However, some of the participants disagreed on some of the proposals such as the banning of media ownership by political parties.

In his presentation, Professor Yoon highlighted several key issues such as the driving forces for reforms in political financing and the reformed institutional settings of campaign finances system in South Korea. He cited four key driving forces behind the electoral reforms that South Korea has undertaken since 2003, namely, (1) public outcry of illegal political financing, (2) the role of reform-oriented political party, (3) the role of civil society, and (4) the role of the National Election Commission (NEC).

As South Korean had undergone electoral reforms since 2003, there are several key features in the new electoral system that contributed to the transformation of political financing in South Korea. A new campaign financing law – Political Fund Act, was introduced in 2004. The Act emphasised on key issues such as transparency and accountability in sources of income for parties and candidates, imposing donation limit, transparency in disclosure and reporting of parties and candidates’ account, reimbursement of campaign expenditure, and to encourage political donation from the public. The Act also imposed strict enforcement and punishment for violation of any regulations stipulated in the Act.