

## **Venerable Wei Wu's Welcome Address**

Dear Venerable members of Mahasangha, sisters and brothers, good morning!

To foreign participants, welcome to Malaysia, I wish you a happy stay in Penang. For local participants, welcome to Than Hsiang Temple for the 2015 AEC Conference on 'Buddhist Social Work and Education'.

We had a fruitful conference in Pattaya last year and agreed that ASEAN should not only focus on economic collaboration as implied in AEC (ASEAN Economic Community). Than Hsiang and IBC agreed to host the conference for 2015.

In 2015, Malaysia is taking up the chairmanship of ASEAN which was formed in 1967 in Thailand. Than Hsiang is also celebrating its 30th anniversary with this conference as one of its anniversary activities.

There is certainly a need for material progress, however merely focus on economy will bring disaster to the world. So it is very meaningful for us to have this conference annually that can be hosted by different ASEAN nations in rotation and collaborate on Buddhist studies.

I am very happy that we will have altogether 17 papers related to Buddhist education and social work from participants of 7 ASEAN countries. I thank all the 17 speakers for their contributions.

There will be 4 papers related to Malaysia, 1 from Ajahn Porntipha on 'Chinese Buddhist Missionary in Malay Peninsular'; 1 from Dr Goh on KASIH Hospice; 1 from Brother Lye on the Bodhi Schools and 1 from Sister Wei Yean on Than Hsiang Temple. I would like to take this opportunity to briefly touch on Buddhist education and social work which are not covered in the above papers:

On education, there are many Buddhist kindergartens run by Buddhist temples or Buddhist organizations throughout the country. Besides the Bodhi schools, some Thai temples also run schools teaching Thai and Pali language to monks and lay members, there is also another Buddhist primary school established by the late Most Venerable Kim Beng in Malacca. A Buddhist free school was also established in Penang 51 years ago. The Than Hsiang Buddhist Research Centre was established more than 20 years ago to offer

Buddhist Studies courses of the Buddhist and Pali University Of Sri Lanka. Today, it offers IBC's MA courses for students in Penang and Kuala Lumpur. The Malaysian Buddhist Institute has operated for over 40 years to provide monastic education for young Buddhist monks and nuns and lay students; it was founded by the late Most Venerable Chok Mor and is under the Malaysian Buddhist Association. Fo Guan Shan is running the Dong Zen Buddhist College in Selangor. There is also the Dharma U which is a non-accredited institution in Pahang state.

On welfare work, Zhu Chi from Taiwan runs many branches in different states in Malaysia, they emphasize mainly on welfare work but also run a few kindergartens. There are more than 100 free medical clinics operating in different states. There are 5 (maybe more) counselling centres in KL, Penang and Ipoh. Besides KASIH, there is another hospice - 'Pure Lotus Hospice of Compassion' in Penang which is very well managed and supported. There are more than 10 each of old folks homes and kidney dialysis centres, about 10 orphanages or homes for children of broken families operating in different states.

Many Buddhist organizations have welfare sections that organize different welfare work including involvement in disaster relief work within Malaysia and in foreign countries.

In summary, Buddhist temples and organizations are doing education and social work as an expression of the great teachings of the Buddha; more temples and organizations are starting to do these if they had not done so already. My assessment is that more can be done.