

REPORT
on
Advanced Environment- and Climate Change
Reporting



Visit to the Prime Ministers office, Mr. Bo Lidegaard, special advisor to the Prime Minister on COP15 and the Chinese group

Advanced Environment- and Climate Change Reporting

During 10 days from 9th June to 18th June 2010 a course for 10 Chinese journalists on Climate Change Reporting was implemented by Caijing Magazine of Beijing and International Media Support (IMS) of Copenhagen.

The course ran for four days in Beijing followed by five days in Denmark. The course aimed to provide the participants with in-depth knowledge of the most current scientific evidence of climate change and its environmental, economic and policy ramifications in China, as well as in-depth knowledge of relevant Danish clean-tech technologies and energy policies. Finally, the course served as a thorough introduction to the UN's climate conference, COP15, scheduled for December 2009 in Copenhagen.

Participants

The course was specifically designed to meet professional needs of senior, practicing journalists from China's print media. Priority was given to journalists with a record of excellence, investigative journalism and some experience in dealing with environmental issues. Only few editorial offices in China have specialized reporters who deal exclusively with the environment and/or climate change, so no such specialization was made a requirement for participation.

The 10 participants were selected through a public application process organized by Caijing Magazine open to all Chinese print media and their staff. The selection was done by Caijing Magazine, and the final selection was agreed to by IMS in Copenhagen.

The 10 selected journalists represented a cross-section of provincial and national media from Eastern and Southern China, including Southern Metropolitan, China Youth Daily, Shandong Dazhong Daily, Nanfang Weekend, The Economic Observer, China Business Journal, 21 Century News, Caijing Magazine and the news agency Xinhua – including the agencies international desk in Beijing and Xinhua's branch in Henan Province.

The inclusion of journalists from a broad variety of media proved to be an effective departure point for professional discussions among participants - both during formal sessions and informally between sessions.

Language

All sessions during the course was conducted in Chinese or in English with instant translation into Chinese. In the selection of participants knowledge of English weighted as a qualifying factor, but it was not considered sine qua non. A couple of the participants were good English speakers, where others had only rudimentary English.

Content in Beijing

The course days in Beijing were organized exclusively by Caijing Magazine, with IMS adding only few comments and ideas, whereas the reverse was the case for the days in Denmark. This proved to be a constructive approach: While cross-fertilization of ideas was facilitated through frequent communication and transparency, no effort was wasted on cumbersome processes of forced consultations on detail.

In Beijing focus was on providing the participants with the most current information on climate change, its impact on China's environment and economy and the resulting policies adopted by Chinese authorities. A series of high ranking public officials, scientific experts, NGO-representatives and the chief environment expert from the World Bank in China provided in-put and engaged in Q&A-sessions with the participants. Such access to current and official information and direct interactions with key sources would in many instances be very difficult for Chinese journalists to obtain in their day to day working routines. The esteem and prestige of Caijing Magazine, which is widely regarded as a leader in Chinese journalism, assisted greatly in this regard.

The list of guest lecturers included:

Dr. Zhang Chengyi, Chief Scientist from the Laboratory for Climate Studies of China Meteorological Administration;

Mr.Gao Guangsheng, Head of the Climate Change Office, State Development and Reform Commission;

Mr. Shen Yongping, Editor-in-Chief of the Climate Change and Developments Magazine;

Prof. He Jiankun, Director of the Low-Carbon Energy Lab, Tsinghua University;

Mr. Jia Feng, Vice-Director of the Department of Education and Communications of the Ministry of Environmental Protection;

Dr. Zhang Haibin, Associate Professor of the School of International Studies, Peking University;

Mr. Li Dawei Manager of the Caijing Environment Center;

Mrs. Liao Xiaoyi, Founder of Global Village in Beijing;

Mrs. Chen Dongmei, Director of the Climate and Energy Program, WWF China and Mr. Carter Brandon, Lead Environmental Specialist of the World Bank Beijing Office.

Finally the participants paid a visit to the Solar Thermal Power Generation Plant of the Institute of Electrical Engineering at the Chinese Academy of Sciences in Beijing.

In a separate workshop in Beijing Mr. Wang Yichao, who is the environmental editor of Caijing Magazine and Mr. Wang Yichao, who reports on climate change for Caijing, provided in-pu for a professional discussion with the participants about the current challenge of reporting on climate change for Chinese media. Also, the head of Caijing's Environment Centre, Mr. Li Dawei, introduced the unique environmental program of Caijing, illustrating Caijing's innovative approach to mitigation of climate change which goes far beyond just covering climate change in the magazine.

Content in Denmark

For the course days in Copenhagen, Professor Xu Hong, who is the Dean of the School of Communication and Journalism at Peking University, and Ms. Xiaoying Pan of Caijing Magazine, joined the group.

The course days in Denmark mixed sessions with public officials and politicians with input from businesses in the clean-tech sector and on-site visits. The program benefitted greatly from logistical assistance provided by 'Klimakonsortiet', a joint venture between the government of Denmark and the private sector promoting Denmark as a nation engaged in mitigating climate change.

While in Denmark, the course participants met with:

Ms. Connie Hedegaard, Minister of Climate & Energy and chief negotiator in the run-up to the UN's COP15;

Mr. Bo Lidegaard, special advisor to the Prime Minister on COP15;

Mr. Finn Mortensen, director of 'Klimakonsortiet';

Mr. Hans Jürgen Sehr, head of the Danish Commission of Climate.

Mr. Knud Pedersen, vice-president of DONG Energy;

Mr. Jens Holst and Karl Malling Granov of the Confederation of Danish Industry;

Mr. Anne Højer Simonsen of the Danish Energy Agency,

Mr. Erik Gielen, Marketing and Communication Director in China and Mr. Thomas Nordli, Senior consultant, of Rockwool International (Roxul).



The Danish Energy and Climate Minister, Ms Connie Hedegaard

During on-site visits to the waste incinerating plant, 'Amagerforbrændingen', the participants met the director, Ms. Ulla Röttger and Julie Bauer Larsen, communication officer. While sailing to the off-shore windmill park 'Horns Rev', an introduction was provided by Mr. Rune Birk Nielsen of the Danish Wind Industry Association, while an on-site visit to the Danfoss company was facilitated by Mr Georg Meister, Visitor Relation Manager. A visit to the farm of Mr. Søren Wiuff was arranged enroute to Dragsholm Castle, where the vice director Mr. Thomas Kjelfred introduced the castle and its energy saving program.

In Parliament the participants met with Ms. Anne Grethe Holmsgaard, member of Parliament for the opposition party, Socialist People's Party, and with Mr. John Nordbo, head of Climate Change Programme, World Wildlife Foundation.

Professional exchange

The professional discussion on climate change reporting, which was started during the special workshop in Beijing, continued in Copenhagen during an afternoon- and evening workshop moderated by Mr. Alex Kirby, a former environmental correspondent of the BBC in London.

A number of Danish journalists, all members of the Danish Association of Environmental Journalists, joined this workshop and engaged in dialogue with their Chinese counterparts.

New opportunities

During the course days in Beijing the China Media Centre of the University of Westminster in London conducted interviews with the course participants and some of the guest lecturers, and an observer from CMC participated in during the courses days in Denmark. The information collected by CMC will add to a broad range of other interviews and information and serve as basis for a survey on 'New Opportunities for Environment- and Climate Change Reporting in China'. This survey will be published in Chinese and English in the second half of 2009.

Evaluation

After the end of the formal program in Denmark the participants were asked to fill in a non-compulsory questionnaire in order to evaluate the Danish leg of the course. The main bulk of the questions related to the level of relevance of the different sessions of the course to the participants daily work as journalists in China. The details of the evaluation will now help Caijing and IMS design future courses, if and when this becomes relevant.

As an example, all participants rated the meeting with Ms. Hedegaard, the Danish Minister of Climate & Energy, who is currently in the very centre of global negotiations prior to COP15, as highly relevant to their daily work. Other ratings were perhaps less easy to predict: Many participants rated as highly relevant, and commented on it in detail, the visit to the farm of Mr. Søren Wiuff, which had a distinctly low-key and private character.



The Asparagus farmer Mr. Søren Wiuff with Chinese journalists

Funding and future courses

The course was funded by IMS through its China Programme financed by the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Course participation was free for the participants. All participants retained their normal income from their employers during the course.

The evaluations of the participants indicate that training in climate change reporting is regarded highly relevant by the journalists themselves – both by journalists from national print media and from media published at a provincial level.

In addition, the professional discussions on climate change reporting with the participants in Beijing and Copenhagen confirmed that skilled journalists like these course participants have ample opportunity to publish in-depth and professional journalism in their respective media on a wide scope of topics related to climate change.

It follows that training provided in this manner is very likely to be actively applied and translated into more and better climate related articles in the Chinese print media.

Based on this conclusion, Caijing Magazine and IMS will now discuss possible improvements to the course concept and possible options, including new and additional sources of funding, for a repetition of this course in 2010.



Visit to the Danish Parliament, Ms. Anne Grethe Holmsgaard and Mr. Yuan Ye

All pictures Lis Jespersen/IMS