# **V**MIGRANT WORKERS' O I C E O F L S 자연대신문

1st Issue(English Edition)

Publisher: MWV Editorial team /TEL:02-985-9061 /Email: vmigrant@hotmail.com

Feb. 1. 2001



Indonesian woman worker distributing leaflets at National Workers' Rally

# aunching message

## We Want to Go Together!

Helen Obrero(Philippines)

#### Why we became migrant worker?

The unequal exchange of commodities, capital and labor resulting from the economic relation existing between the weak and powerful nations. This relation produced a strong powerful capitalist societies on one hand and dependent underdeveloped countries on the other. Because of their economic might, the strong capitalist countries are able to dictate the economic and political developments or underdevelopment in weaker nations. For example, capitalist countries initiated the dubious imposition of APEC, WTO and IMF-WB policies and recommended the smooth and easy facilitation of the exchange of cheap labor and eliminate the obstacles to the conversion of workers into export commodity. As such, the workers are offered for sale to whoever was interested in cheap, industrious, skilled and docile labor. This phenomenon has become more evident and continually raises the inequality between capitalist and undeveloped countries. The capitalist countries has succeeded in exploiting the poor countries' national resources but human resources as well. The increasing

demand for cheap and docile labor, and the export of human resources become a lucrative government business, governments of poor countries like the Philippines at an extent has become a giant pimp for migrants and adopted forced migration to earn the much needed dollars for the economy.

The demand for labor in developed countries is dictated by market demands of labor power, most often for these are in jobs which are shunned by their nationals because these are lowly paid in their countries aside from being classified as 3D jobs (Dirty, Difficult and Dangerous). In addition, they employ foreign workers because they can be paid much lower than the usual rate.

#### What is our reality?

Migrants in general do not have any voice in the formal democratic channels. They cannot directly represent themselves to express their grievances therefore they have no way of formally intervening in government policy-making. Few governments provide little channels for representation or even consultation with migrant workers. There is no legal or formal rights to intervene or be represented in foreign country. In many circumstances, different NGOs and migrants support



groups are speaking out in behalf of the migrants because the migrants' human rights, labor rights, and political rights are not recognized or protected due to the fact that many of the migrants are undocumented.

Migrants are often subjected to all kinds of discrimination because they have a different culture, religion or color. In some cases, in other countries, some local workers/union tend to view migrants as "job stealers", and therefore tensions sometimes or even outright hostility develop between local workers and migrants or between migrants themselves.

Most migrants are usually subjected to arbitrary, discriminatory and highly restrictive work or visa conditions. Undocumented, trafficked, illegally recruited and women migrant workers in general are highly vulnerable to all forms of physical, sexual and verbal abuses and are virtually treated as slaves.

Victims of abuse, violations or violence have inadequate or no mechanism to redress their situations. Services are mostly provided by civic, religious and non-governmental groups. Neither the sending nor the receiving countries provide adequate hotline services, emergency shelters, counselling, paralegal services, free legal services and rehabilitation centers. Mechanisms are sometimes weak or lacking to monitor and report on migrants' rights violations and to demand accountability as such.

For sending countries, migrants are little more than "milking cows" who can funnel-in billions of US dollars to help save the beleaguered cash-strapped economies. Migration is seen as a way out of the economic crisis through the remittances and to decrease the unemployment in the country.

#### Migrants and Korean Workers Unite!

#### Strengthen our Solidarity for our Rights and Welfare!

Workers solidarity is a value we must all realize. Our continuing assertion for our rights is to counter the oppressive and exploitative dynamics of injustices of capitalism that is heaped on us by financial elites and international multi-lateral institutions especially the IMF-WB, WTO, and APEC. Uniting our ranks and linking up with local workers is necessary to strengthen our struggles. To counter these injustices we must deny the forces of domination and oppression. It is therefore our prerogative to consolidate our ranks and stand

together with all the oppressed workers and other sectors of society.

Migrants should harness the organizing power both the theory and practice in asserting for rights. That is to say by forming mass organizations among our ranks for the promotion and protection of our rights and welfare. Through organizing migrants, can have a collective strength, skills and experiences which can be harnessed to promote and defend the legitimate interest for improvement of our situation. The condition that breeds injustices and exploitation and all the experiences we have undergone, requires us to work together for a common good. We have no other choice but to rely on our common and united strength.

#### We dedicate MWV to all migrant workers

That is why we migrants coming from different communities and nationalities must unite in an effort to consolidate our common voice. As part of our undertakings to reach-out the majority of migrant workers in Korea and at the same time develop links with the local workers, we are releasing "THE MIGRANT WORKERS' VOICE". This publication will serve as a medium for our news, community updates, migrants' issues and concerns. "THE MIGRANT WORKERS' VOICE" will as well serve as forum to hear migrants' and local workers voice together with all peoples concerns.

"THE MIGRANT WORKERS' VOICE" will be released once every month. Articles to be tackled will focus on the cultural, national, and educational, component that pertains to migrants concerns. The entire publication will be divided in News section, Main Article section, and Editorial section.

By the continuous releasing of this publication, migrants and local workers voice can be echoed all over. Migrants and readers can directly hear us and express our innermost feelings and views. News updates from our homelands will be heard and shared to people so as to let them understand why we migrate as well as to educate migrants about the root causes of migration. Our continuing solidarity with in our ranks and with local workers will draw strength to further develop our advocacy and struggle for migrants' rights and welfare.

#### MWU

# Why workers are one?

Editorial Team

The common point of Korean worker, migrant worker, regular worker, contingent worker, male worker, female worker etc is the fact that they are all 'worker'. worker does not have money and any background. The only thing they have, is their own body they can work. Worker has no choice but to keep working for getting means of living necessary to maintain his or her living. At this point, it does not matter that he or she is from where and works for which company. As a matter of fact, although there seems to be an abyss between Korean worker and migrant worker, aside from their nationality, we are able to discover simple and same root from the fact that we are equally "worker".

However, employers split worker into industry types, regions and states. They devide by female, male, regular and contingent worker. Why do they do so? Because, common purpose of employers is to generate more profit. Therefore capitalists make workers disunite and employ them with lower salary by splitting regular or not and intend to achieve original goal of surplus profit. The capitalists reinforce pressure upon the worker to make more profits while competing with other capitalists. The capitalist makes worker slave more, lengthens working hours, robs breaktime and makes them just an accessory of machine. Also, through introduction of new technology and automation of machine, the capitalists do not need complicated labor of many workers any more. They substitute ordinary non-skilled workers who are willing to adjust to work easily with low salary. If they resist capitalist's increased suppression, they are dismissed. The capitalist takes all of profits produced by workers, in his or her pocket, pays workers only minimum amount of money necessary to live from hand to mouth. Therefore, capitalists pay only some of working time they took advantage of and exploit the rest. While wealth like extravagant house, building, luxurious clothes, etc, is accumulated on the hand which does not work and sweat even a little, poverty and menace of dismissal only are lingering on the worker's hand working desperately. As the adoption of automation and new technology gets to need manual labor less than before, Capitalists dismiss workers massively by making use of it. The street is filled with more workers lost their jobs.

# hat's Happening in Factory?

Korean Capitalist Took His

#### HAND FOREVER

Juddha(Bangladesh)



He is Raju. One andhalf
year ago, he came to Korea
from Bangladesh only for
money. He worked no matter
what any hard kind of job.

After so many trying, at last he found a good job. It was steel factory all you know what it is. Salary was good and employer was good. Totally every thing was good what some people could get it. Day by day he is getting skilled of all machines in his factory. Time also passed with happy and sorrow like others. In the morning 8th december last year he started to work like other day. After a few hours he was changing the dies. His hand was in danger area. He did not know how to press the switch. Suddenly he saw his right hand hanging on machine. When he saw his hand cut then he fell down. He could never get his hand back. Can you imagine this matter? He did not get married. Could he get back his same work? his same hand?

Fortunately he could get the benefit of industrial accident compensation insurance. However, around us, there are many migrant workers who are kicked out of his or her factory without saying about it far from compensated although his or her hand was cut in workplace. We are working in unsafe workplace where safety equipment is not installed in harsh working condition. This is not because we want but because employers want to make more money employing with cheaper wages. Even if he is compensated with money, his hand already cut cannot be taken back to previous state again and his mental shock is needless to say. This is reality all workers including migrant workers, are facing now.

They wander from place to place for their jobs. Finally they work at far land from their countries and families like migrant workers.

Therefore, the capitalists look for the cheaper labor desperately. Because the lower they pay salary to workers, the bigger their pockets become. When workers are kicked out of their work places to the street, capitalists can accumulate wealth. When workers also

are extorted by capitalists, individual worker is sure to be powerless in front of capitalist. Then, workers cannot resist and fall to so-called speaking accessory of machine. Once one worker resists, capitalist notices dismissal to the worker very easily. Because, there are many hungry men who are willing to work with lower salary outside of factory. This society force workers to be put in the most miserable and terrible state. Therefore, workers come to find the ways to resist against capitalist even with all sacrifice to defend themselves and not to be lied in such an extreme environment. That starts from the desperate struggle to achieve their rights as human and the basic right to live. That individual and have-not workers are subordinated to rich capitalist, means making workers complete slave. However, if these workers who have their bodies only unite, situation changes. If the workers are oppressed individually by capitalists to get a piece of bread, they become an employed-slave docile and mute forever. However, when workers assert their demands collectively and refuse to be surrendered to moneybag, they become human being throwing shackle of slave. When we talk about working class, we call worker who turns his or her face away from colleagues and is swayed by competing strategy of capitalists 'slave', not worker. Nevertheless, when he or she who starts to fight with one voice sharing their colleague's

sufferings and sorrow together, to take the rights as human back, eventually he or she becomes an acting worker, truly working class.

#### Why workers must unite?

As we mentioned above, when worker is isolated individually by capital, he or she become a slave

only and is never free from capitalists' unfair treatment and suppression. Also, if he or she resists individually against capitalist, he or she lay on the position of being oppressed or fired by the employer. Therefore, worker has no choice but to resist and act collectively. Besides, the power of workers comes from the power of production. This is very important fact and the secret of this society also. If workers resist not individually but collectively as stopping machine, this world cannot go on. This shows the fact that worker is the owner of production and workers are supporting all the world. If worker denies being a slave of huge capital and makes machine stop, can this society be maintained? Look

around us! Are there things like clothes we wear, transportations, things to eat etc that are not passed through hands of workers' labor, their blood and sweat? In addition to this, power of worker comes from number of people. Capitalist society generates more wage workers. Comparing with this, capitalists are a handful number only. Consequently, they make all kinds of law suppressing workers, produce education or theories represented their interests and use police or army to get guaranteed generating profit stably and continuously as dominating over workers. However, workers are occupied majority of this society and form as the great power which nobody is not able to break, only if they stand together and unite for their own common interests. Because, he or she already has potential power in number, "If your strong arm wants, all factories and the world will be stopped."

When slave starts to raise claim to work and live as not the way capitalists want but the way worker wants, workers get to recognize that they are never alone. Despite all sufferings, workers of neighboring factory get new courage with looking their colleagues participate in struggle. Workers speak their claim with big voice and get to think of all colleagues in workplace, who do not think only himself or herself and his or her wages, also uphold the justice of worker with their colleagues. On the contrary, in spite of all suppression from capital,

workers feel contempt for the people who betray colleagues and deal with capitalist. It is different from capitalists who compete and fight one another only for money. This is real worker!

All workers against suppression of capital are one! Regardless of the fact that he or she is

employed by any employer or is working in any workplace, workers are one.

However, we cannot solve all only with this fact. To be truly one, workers must stand together and come forward struggle, not be split into pieces by capitalists. Only when we do so, we can go forward powerfully as we are never afraid of acting in the name of worker. When more migrant workers are not afraid of coming forward struggle, become one and make our iron-fist, we will be able to say that we are going together. It is no more destiny for worker to live as slave. Such an era which workers are scratched, chopped and deprived

(continue →)

# Migrant Workers' Community N - E - W - S

#### + KASAMMAKO +

[reporter:Helen]

The KASAMMAKO or the Katipunan ng mga Samahan ng Migranteng Manggagawa sa Korea (Unity of Filipino Migrant Workers Association in Korea) an alliance of 8 Filipino migrants' organizations celebrated its 3rd Founding Anniversary general assembly on January 24, 2001.

The objective of the assembly is to sum-up the previous programs and activities of the alliance, approve a new program of action and elect new set of officers. The theme of the assembly is "Strengthen the unity within the alliance. Raise the level of understanding on the roots of migration to further consolidate our ranks in order to promote the protection of migrant rights & welfare in particular and the entire Filipino people's interests".

KASAMMAKO has been involved in advocating migrants rights and welfare. Some of the activities it engaged with are the education among its members and campaigning against the Philippine government's anti-people and anti-migrant policy such as the collection of the excessive Philippine government fee and other forms of exaction. One of the these fees collected to migrants is the OWWA membership fee which requires Filipino migrants to pay \$25US every year, the excessive embassy fees. Also KASAMMAKO campaigned for the immediate ouster of the Philippine president who was involved in the illegal gambling activities and violating the constitution and betraying the public trust.

KASAMMAKO is also engaged in assisting migrants and Filipino compatriots in distress and cooperating with other migrants groups and NGO in defending their rights and welfare.

▷ ► ADD. : KPO Box 440 Seoul Kwanghwamun Post Office, Woochekuk Saseoham 440, Seoul Korea 110-604.

Email: kasammako@hotmail.com /kasammakorea@yahoo.com

#### + BANGLADESH COMMUNITIES +

[reporter:Juddha]

Bangladesh Patriot Society(B.P.S.) has arranged the 30th Bijoy Dibosh(victory day annivarsary)program on Dec. 17, 2000 in Ma-Seok Seong-Saeng industrial zone. There was contest of some cultural events with sports. 250 migrant workers were

of their right to live, will be passed away with struggle and unity. Such a destiny is imposed only on workers who do not struggle. Nevertheless, when the moment they refuse to live "as they are given and let", poor workers who have only their bodies, will escape from sufferings and discover brilliant light, hope. We, "Migrant Worker's Voice" also will struggle enthusiastically to advance the day. Struggle![Tu-Jaeng!]

there with korean students and other guests. B.P.S. president said all bangladeshi migrants promised to celebrate all national day with Eid program. The next program will be held on Feb. 21, 2001(World Mother Language day). Then there will be one year anniversary with Eid program. He also described action for human and labor rights. He said "B.P.S. should join any action like this with organization for this." There are some other news from Bangladeshi communities. A few days ago, two communities have organized. One is An-Yang B.W.S.(Bangladesh Workers Society). Another is Ma-Seok B.N.S.(Bangladesh National Society)

D ► B.P.S. Email: bps7@hotmail.com

#### ◆ N. C. C. ◆ [reporter:Sangharsha]

Nepalese migrant workers established the community for unity in 1993 and named it Nepalese Consulting Committee(N.C.C.) As all Nepalese people know the meaning, the capitalists have used workers as their servant. We must make our unity to fight against them. Like this, N.C.C. started working for Nepalese workers and also has appeared as most important community among Nepalese people.

Many trainees came here in korea. Also, they never forgot dominating over them as slave. On Jan, 1995, 13 Nepalese trainees among N.C.C. members, came over the field to protest against Korean government for migrant rights. It was the first strike of the migrant workers.

After the strike in 1995, many religious and social organizations took care of migrants. Many shelters and counselling centers were opened and JCMK(Joint Committee for Migrant Workers) was established. Also many regional communities were established like Khotang social welfare foundation, Dharan korea support team, Myagdi Family etc. N.C.C. was divided with small units. Community's power is weaker than before.

Recently, on last January 14, N.C.C. elected new leaders by general assembly at Bu-Cheon migrant workers' house. N ew president elected said "N.C.C. is our community we must make it strengthen by our unity. Last time N.C.C. had lack of consolidation at the level of organization". Also new secretary elected said "All of you gave us the opportunity to serve Nepalese people. We will try to do our best for our community". Nepalese people shared resolution, "Yolsime hagesmida!"(I'll do my best).

N.C.C. has great responsibility for improving the image of community and working for Nepalese people to achieve migrant's labor rights.

▷ N.C.C. Email: ncc@yahoo.com



## What is SnforMRF?

SNforMRF[http://migrant.nodong.net]

"SNforMRF is trying to stand

together with migrant and Korean

workers"

Struggle Network for Migrant Workers' Labor Rights and Freedom of Migration · Working(SNforMRF) started the first step on Oct. 3, 2000. SNforMRF consists of local activists who worked in counselling support groups for migrant worker and have cooperative relationship between a few migrant workers' communities. Now we are trying to develop as a new

organization which can fight for achieving all migrant workers' rights and make solidarity with migrant workers.

To realize migrant worker's human rights and labor rights, most important thing is not the hands of help but migrant's will themselves. That is our belief. We also believe that migrant's and local worker's rights are not different thing but essentially same one. Because, unless all workers cope with united power

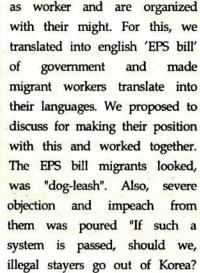
against social controlling element around worker and global policy for dominating worker, any worker cannot be free from it and achieve his or her rights by himself or herself. Until yet, there is lack of workers' recognition though, our assignment is persuading them to think that the status of migrant and Korean worker is not different and they should 'unite' only with the reason why they are all 'worker'.

SNforMRF's purpose lies in worker's unity and solidarity though, concretely we were born to cope with Employment Permit System(EPS) bill of government which has many problems. Although we wanted to prepare fully for our purpose and spirit, we made temporary tactical organization as the name of 'SNforMRF' for this is an very urgent task we should do. Because Korean government has propelled enacting this bill within 2000 advertizing that it is a 'protective measure for migrant worker's human rights' since early last year. However, as a matter of fact, plan for

repatriation of current illegal staying undocumented workers, is included in this bill, provided EPS enforces as proposed bill from government, it is evident that serious suppression against labor rights will happen. Therefore, we wanted to make propaganda concerned the truth of EPS and speak for migrant worker's true interests. Many counselling support groups for migrant worker, focused only on abolishment trainee system within 2000 formally neglecting of problems of EPS bill and majority of undocumented worker's right to live as well.

Currently through activity during about four months, SNforMRF acted mainly concerning two things below.

First, migrant workers themselves recognize their status as worker and are organized



Current status of illegal stayer

will be more favorable, although we are always uneasy." Besides, we made propaganda distributing leaflet of comments and position from migrant workers and SNforMRF on EPS bill. The migrant workers' communities working with SNforMRF, gathered view of workers through discussion many times. In the first time, they started from the question with "Who can help us?", however now they made progress with the conclusion as "We should stand up by ourselves". Although a few communities only are coming forward for finding their place independently yet, we, SNforMRF keeps struggling for setting migrant labor movement with them and returning for their warm solidarity and confidence.

Second, Korean democratic labor movement field recognize that migrant worker is the lowest contingent worker and form solidarity network with them. We thought that contingent worker's movement which main stream of worker's movement like that of the unionized workers in big enterprises in Korea, is not able to

embrace yet, should be extended and strengthened. Therefore we thought, setting right spirit of labor movement as class movement from non-main stream workers, is also our assignment. We ran to workers' struggle of E · LAND, The mutual committee for achieving dispatch worker's labor rights and abolishment indirect employment, Sam-Chang plaza, insurance sales worker with our all strength to show possibility that migrant workers also can make solidarity with local workers. Because, the problem of migrant worker is not only theirs but also fight of all Korean workers struggling and their struggle is migrant workers' at the same time. Many migrant workers could not be together because of work and problem of their status, illegal stayer though, they discussed and shared view with local workers. One migrant spoke strongly in the rally where a lot of Korean workers gathered, that we are one at the point that we are all oppressed worker by capital and the participated workers agreed to that. The existence of migrant worker is making us confirm the fact that workers should make solidarity over the nation against global restructuring and strengthening exploitation of capital, above all we should do so in Korea for this.

Since SNforMRF made a step toward dark world four months ago, many workers and students comrades have visited us and talked concrete solidarity with interest.

Also, many labor unions and activists participated in solidarity rally of three times we hold. We got to be aware that migrant's struggle is never alone and trustworthy Korean workers comrades are close at hand through action. Migrant workers worked together with us, told "The solidarity with Korean worker is not a dream. It came true here!"

We will try to strengthen solidarity with local workers and form network of international migrant workers continuously. In addition to this, above all we want you, migrant worker reading this newsletter, to have confidence of recognizing your rights and taking it back. Because, we want migrant worker like you not to live burying dignity and rights as human for a while though. Anyone has the right to work where he or she want freely and therefore we have also the right to fight against element suppressing it.

We, SNforMRF may probably change our name in the next newsletter. We will try to run to every place where you are and be with you or through this newsletter. We will be born newly as the organization standing together with migrant workers, sooner or later. In the long perspective, we will advance forward establishing migrant worker's labor union and being an organization struggling for migrant workers' and all oppressed workers' rights with one voice with Korean workers. We are confident if you are with us. MWU

### IMPORTANT NEWS FOR MIGRANT WORKERS

From Dec. 20, 2000 Ministry of justice has entered into intensive period of search against illegal stayers. We should request to all migrant workers be careful when they move to other place. Because we are the target of Korean immigration.



On Jan. 19, SNforMRF and 'student acting group for achieving labor rights of female & migrant workers' held a rally demanding to stop searching and give amensty for illegal staying undocumented workers.

They put warning posters on the gate of four factories notorious for unpaid salary and human rights violation in Ma-seok Seong-saeng industrial zone on the next day Jan. 20 and held a rally urging to end of verbal abuse · violence and solve habitual unpaid salary.

# KOREAN WORKERS ON THE STRUGGLE

#### + E-LAND labor union +

The enterprise E-LAND is Korean representative clothing producing and marketing company, established in 1980 and rooted in Christian faith. At IMF financial crisis, E-LAND has promoted unstability of employment as replacing goods marketing and storage-managing workers with mostly part-timers or contract workers except office workers. Also, after IMF financial crisis, the wages of contingent workers fell to 506,000 won a month. With this monthly salary, it is clear that they cannot enjoy the standard of living. Finally E-LAND labor union has been processing strike-struggle over than two hundred days for achieving contingent workers' right to live. This company insisted that contingent worker storage-managing, injured waist while lifting packages pay the hospital treatment expense individually. Besides, E-LAND labor union received legal establishment permit from the Ministry of labor though, enterprise said that E · LAND labor union was 'congenital deformity' which must not be born in Christian enterprise and should be demolished.

E-LAND Labor Union is was made of regular workers and contingent workers together. Now, they are making exemplary struggle fighting against dividing worker strategy of capital which classifies as regular and contingent job and discriminates contingent workers.

#### Korea Telecom contract workers' union ◆

Korea Telecom trade union was already made of regular workers before establishing contract workers' union. The contract workers intended to belong to Korea Telecom regular workers' labor union early this year. However, they could not join because of regular workers' union's refusal. As appeared in the process of establishing Korea Telecom contract workers' labor union, the root of labor union lies in pain and reality of Korea Telecom contingent workers.

The contract workers are mainly working for sections for the people like installing, fixing telephone and ADSL, 114 information of telephone number etc. They have worked for three to ten years receiving 850,000 won, 620,000 won, 450,000 won as monthly salary. They have been working eagerly even receiving less than minimum wages(390,000 won) with only hope for becoming regular worker someday. However, Korea Telecom is saying them to go out, for they are not needed in the process of restructuring.

Such a situation of contingent workers are not different from even that of regular workers. Currently, Korea Telecom is mad about preparing legal base for restructuring propelling enact of electronic telecommunication business law. Also, under the purpose of privatization, Korea Telecom has taken notice of dismissal to 3,000 regular workers and 7,000 contingent workers nationwide.

The restructuring of Korea Telecom has processed since 1997, dismissed 12,000 regular workers during 1998 and 1999. It replaced those places of regular workers with contract workers. The restructuring in the near future, is supposed to make employment of Korea Telecom workers unstable and empty places by lay-offs be filled up with contract workers again. Therefore, struggle against restructuring of Korea Telecom should proceed as fighting over classification of regular and contingent worker.

#### **MWV Editorial Teams want Your Letters!**

Although we are from different countries and have different culture, religion and color, we are going to publish "The Migrant Workers' Voice" together because we have same opinion as far as migrant worker's rights are concern. This is the 1st edition of our mutual newspaper. This also means a kind of challenge to us.

"Migrant Workers' Voice" is released in Korean, English, Bengali, Nepali editions. We welcome comments, criticisms, suggestions and want to submit any contributing articles, poems, artworks or be part of making this news paper. The organizations or individuals who want to subscribe MWV and person who wants to send donation, please contact us.

- · Publisher:
  - MWV Editorial Team
- Reporter & Editor: Hellen, Juddha, Andolan, Sangharsha, Sumi-Lee
- E-MAIL:
  - vmlgrant@hotmail.com
- Address: (142-103)
   3FL. 121-18, Mia 3-dong,
   Gangbuk-gu, Seoul,
   South Korea
- Tel: 02-985-9061
- Fax: 02-981-0963