

ILO selects State-based firm for action research programme

The programme will focus on decent work deficit in the country

Staff Reporter

THRISSUR: The International Labour Organisation, a specialised agency of the United Nations that deals with labour issues, has selected Kerala-based ESAF Microfinance as one of the two microfinance institutions (MFIs) for conducting an Action Research Programme on Decent Work Deficit in India.

Addressing a press conference here on Monday, Severine Deboos, Technical

Expert (Social Finance) with ILO, said the programme was being conducted worldwide through 17 MFIs in 15 countries. Under the programme, ILO will provide 1.5 lakh U.S. dollars to ESAF Microfinance.

The ESAF Microfinance claims to support 17,000 self-help groups in five States by following the model of the Grameen Bank of Bangladesh founded by Nobel laureate Mohammed Yunus, which provides small loans to the

poor for self-employment. Beneficiaries of ESAF's activities have reportedly received loans to the tune of Rs.400 crore.

Counselling centres

K. Paul Thomas, managing director of ESAF, said that the funds given by ILO would be used to start business counselling centres. "Decent work embraces various aspects of the daily life of the working poor, productive employment, safe working con-

ditions, a fair and equitable access to employment opportunities, absence of child labour, abolition of bonded labour, formalisation of informal enterprises, access to social protection and the right to organise. Decent work is far from being a reality for millions of working poor: still, 1.5 billion people live on less than US \$ 2 a day," she said.

Hideki Kagoeshi, Enterprise Development Specialist, ILO, was also present.