



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Between 31 May and 4 June 1999, 24 students chosen from leading universities in Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand, gathered at the 3rd Hitachi Young Leaders Initiative in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The Initiative is a regional forum developed by Hitachi three years ago committed towards identifying and nurturing young potential leaders of Asia. The forum provides a platform for the young leaders to discuss and exchange ideas on significant issues facing Asia and to enhance cross-cultural understanding and acceptance.

FORUM THEME

The theme for the forum was, "*Leading Dynamic Asia into the New Global Age*". The 24 student participants worked in three workshop groups to address the following sub-themes:

- *Strategies for Education*
- *Strategies for Economic Development*
- *Strategies for Social Welfare*

GUEST SPEAKERS

About 400 guests attended the two-day forum, including key public figures and renowned speakers from the region. The distinguished speakers were:

- **Datin Paduka Zaleha Bt. Ismail**
Minister for National Unity and Social Development (Malaysia)
- **Professor Tatsuhiko Kodama**
Professor of Molecular Biology and Medicine, The University of Tokyo (Japan)
- **Khunying Chodchoy**
President of *Taviset* (Magic Eye Foundation) (Thailand)
- **Dr Karlina Leksono**
Founder of *Suara Ibu Peduli* (Voice of Concerned Mothers) (Indonesia)
- **Tan Sri Dato Dr Awang Had Bin Salleh**
Professor Emeritus, University Utara Malaysia (Malaysia)
- **Professor Tan Sri Dr Syed Jalaludin bin Syed Salim**
Vice-Chancellor of Universiti Putra Malaysia (Malaysia)
- **Professor Leo Tan**
Director of Singapore's National Institute of Education
Dean of Science at Nanyang Technological University (Singapore)
- **Tan Sri Dato Ramon V. Navaratnam**
Corporate Adviser to SungeiWay Group (Malaysia)
- **Dr Ghazali Atan**
CEO and Managing Director of Metrowangsa Asset Management Sdn Bhd (Malaysia)

*It is recommended
that Asian
governments
intensify restructuring
efforts and strengthen
small and medium
enterprises (SMEs)
for sustainable
development.*

At the forum and plenary sessions, the speakers presented thought-provoking insights on issues facing Asia in the areas of education, economic development and social welfare. The student participants discussed and deliberated over the challenging issues highlighted by the speakers at their respective workshop sessions.

VISIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ASIA

The forum culminated into the following collective visions and recommendations for Asia put forward by the 24 young potential leaders:

(1) Strategies for Education

Education is the foundation for global competitiveness. Three common issues of concern facing Asian education are identified and are represented by a pyramidal structure which reflects the varying development levels of Asian countries. Starting from the widest base at the bottom, the three issues and the recommendations to address them are put forth as follows:

1. *Fundamentals of the Education System*

- education must be set ahead in the list of national priorities to ensure total commitment to reform at the highest levels of government.
- the core tasks of 'teaching' are fast becoming sidelined from the constant need for administration and decentralisation to counter education bureaucracy. This strategy would give schools flexibility in dealing with issues like recruitment and procurement of materials.
- instead of a singular educational path that concludes at a University degree, vocational and non-formal alternatives should be expanded to meet the needs of the people in pursuing careers best suited to their inclination and abilities.
- education must be responsive to meet the need for qualified and specialised professionals of emerging fields like information technology in a timely manner.

2. *Teaching Process*

- Democratisation of the classroom is needed. Teachers should facilitate learning by encouraging enquiry and participation. Evaluation methods should be holistic to encourage students to think, to apply what they have learnt and to use their creativity and ingenuity to solve problems, with greater focus given to participation in extra-curricular activities. There must also exist a feedback flow between the people affected by the education policies and the policymakers.
- information technology should be introduced as a tool to facilitate learning and emphasised as an area of study.
- the profession has to be perceived as a very attractive career option to draw quality applicants. This could be achieved by restructuring the salary schemes.
- society and students to be inculcated with a culture of lifelong learning.
- the respective ministries of education should instil in young students a strong realisation of the importance of social responsibility and civic consciousness.

3. *Global Competitiveness*

The global competitiveness of Asia can be enhanced through education by:

- implementing English as a core subject as early as possible in the school curriculum.
- intra-Asia exchange and scholarship programmes to improve the interaction and foster stronger links within the Asian community.
- ranking of the schools and universities as a challenge to excel and upgrade their teaching processes, academic standards and contributions to a quality workforce.
- making the local environment appealing and attractive to retain local talents and generate national pride, identity and loyalty.
- foster the development of leadership qualities through extra-curricular activities and giving more weight to this criterion assessing overall performance.
- constant upgrading by modifying and adopting educational models of technologically more advanced countries to meet the unique needs of each country, and experts to be invited to provide skills training and suggestions towards upgrading of human resources.





(2) Strategies for Economic Development

The student participants envision Asia entering a new era of cooperation for economic growth and sustainable development based on Asian Unity, which is achievable through economic interaction and networking initiatives at all levels in the government and private sectors. The political will of Asian countries is paramount to achieving the identified objectives of:

1. *Creating a greater ability to influence globalisation*

- Asia can potentially take a lead in globalisation and has the ability to practice “self-less” leadership. Asian economies are urged to look towards less developed economies outside the region and to strike a balance between the quest for profitability and setting an example of economic responsibility.

2. *Achieving sustainable economic growth*

- *Better management of human capital*

A structured dynamic education and training system to constantly upgrade the skills and knowledge of the people to meet the challenges of a knowledge-based economy.

- *Environmental-awareness*

Institutions need to improve their accounting standards and systems based on eco-accounting and Asia to increase research efforts towards developing zero-emission and zero-waste technology.

- *Restructuring of the financial and non-financial sectors*

It is recommended that Asian governments intensify restructuring efforts and strengthen small and medium enterprises (SMEs) for sustainable development. These efforts would lead to greater transparency, more efficient operations and enhanced competitiveness in the financial sectors.

(3) Strategies for Social Welfare

The young leaders of Asia share a vision of a society where every person:

- has the opportunity to grow and reach their full potential as individuals, while retaining a sense of responsibility for society; is socially conscious and creative, as well as a critical thinker and a transforming figure.
- is self-reliant and unoppressed by existing governments, cultural and foreign expectations when working towards pragmatic solutions.
- has the initiative and desire to improve themselves to meet material, personal, societal, and spiritual needs through their own efforts collectively, as a society.
- is adaptable and flexible in facing a changing and dynamic world.

Objectives of the strategies are to:

- 1) create an enabling and discrimination-free environment that provides for the individual basic needs, which include education, dignity and opportunity to maximise one’s full potential.
- 2) empower all individuals through the ability to sustain one’s physical needs and affect change in one’s community and government; the access to quality education; and the realisation of one’s capability to be a leader.

“We hope the collective voice of these potential young leaders of Asia will be given a place and due consideration within the existing and future framework of the various establishments in Asia.”

- 3) promote, protect the needs and well-being of individuals and society by establishing a synergy to affect positive bilateral change.
- 4) achieve sustainable development by maintaining the progress and co-existence between economic and social development, and environmental resources.

The problem situations have been identified as follows:

- lack of organisational structure has caused stagnation and hindrance of progressive moves and programmes towards tackling deteriorating social conditions in some countries.
- lack of organisation, coordination and an efficient structure between existing governmental and non-government social welfare systems have resulted in inefficient dissemination of resources and a waste of valuable resources.
- loss or threat of losing Asian traditions and identity to Western values if countries move towards a welfare state system, which in turn could threaten social cohesion and social identity.
- absence of a common Asian perspective of fundamental and civil human rights has resulted in either the total neglect or indeterminate postponement of these rights altogether.
- absence of fundamental empowerment instruments, such as education, has caused marginalised groups to be vulnerable to abuse, disease, discrimination and exploitation.
- mismanagement of financial resources to effectively create and sustain social welfare programmes is the fundamental impediment against the programmes' successful implementation.



Recommendations:

- 1) to establish a national coordinating committee (NCC) in each country, acting locally as an organisation with a determined political and social will.

The tasks of NCC would be two-fold:

- a) coordinate the distribution and allocation of social welfare resources from pre-existing organisations. Reorganisation and collaboration of pre-existing organisations into a centralised distribution body would eliminate the redundant use of funds.
 - b) organise regular public forums to receive public feedback. The public will also have access to information, education and services which will empower marginalised groups to protect themselves and reduce vulnerability and inhumane conditions.
- 2) to establish a Regional Coordinating Committee (RCC) for NCC representatives to meet at regular intervals and set a common standard for social reform in the region and share resources.

Hitachi trusts that this report will provide you with an insight into the concerns, hopes and aspirations of the future young leaders of Asia. Asia stands at the threshold of an exciting and challenging future with the turn of this new century. We hope the collective voice of these potential young leaders of Asia will be given a place and due consideration within the existing and future framework of the various establishments in Asia.

Last but not least, we invite you to forward to us any constructive feedback or comments that you may have.

Thank you.

3rd HITACHI
YOUNG
LEADERS
INITIATIVE