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Asia's Young Leaders Co-operate to Develop Recommendations for Regional Issues

7th Hitachi Young Leaders Initiative Focuses on Balancing People, Planet and Profit for Asia's Future

Twenty-four of Asia's future leaders came together at the 7th Hitachi Young Leaders Initiative (HYLI) to discuss key issues impacting the region as a whole and develop recommendations on how they can be addressed. The overall theme for the initiative is "Balancing People, Planet and Profit for Asia's Future", and the sub-themes are "Challenges and Opportunities of Economic Integration", "Translating Environmental Awareness into Action", and "The Changing Role of Education in a Dynamic Asia".

Following insightful presentations delivered by Asia's current thought leaders during a two-day forum and intense workshop sessions, the HYLI delegates worked together as one united region to develop ideas which will be published in a white paper for distribution to the respective governments, academics and related NGO organisations by the end of the year.

Mr. Kazuo Furukawa, Executive Vice President and Executive Officer, Hitachi, Ltd., said, "To safeguard Asia's progress and development, regional understanding and co-operation is essential. Our young leaders have taken that first step towards a brighter future for us by actively participating in the 7th Hitachi Young Leaders Initiative. Their commitment to problem solving, leadership skills and strong teamwork demonstrate that they have what it takes to achieve greater heights for Asia as a whole."

Similarly, the moderators for the initiative, Dr. Goh Chee Leong, Director, Centre for Psychology, HELP University College, and Dr. Minni K. Ang, both praised the students for their refreshing ideas and ability to develop sound recommendations within a limited amount of time.

The Hitachi Young Leaders' recommendations for the three sub-themes are as follows:

Economic Sub-theme: Challenges and Opportunities of Asian Economic Integration

Asian nations have been actively integrating their economies through various bilateral and multilateral agreements. These efforts are currently facing a gap whereby many countries are interested but incapable of participating in free trade.

Process for an East Asia Common Economy (P.E.A.C.E.) is a programme devised to accelerate the integration of the economies in Asia. This programme will be integrated into the existing East Asian Community (EAC) as a complementary system to the free trade area. This programme aims to set up a fund by consolidating voluntary contributions from member countries. These funds will be utilised to:

- Develop social safety nets
- Fund economic development of nations which need assistance

- Improve the free trade process through trade facilitation efforts
- Develop a more integrated infrastructure
- Harmonise standards and practices of civil services

Environment Sub-theme: Translating Environmental Awareness into Action

The recommendations aim to address the challenges of economic constraints, poor governance and the lack of ownership, resulting in the continued degradation of the environment in Asia.

- The Green Bank is a financial institution fully devoted to sustainable development by providing financial support to eligible environmentally sustainable projects.
- Sustainable Practices for Holistic Environmental Resource Engagement (SPHERE) is a community-based resource management programme aimed at protecting the environment by empowering the community while enhancing their means of livelihood.

Education Sub-theme: Changing Role of Education in a Dynamic Asia

As Asia faces a new wave of globalisation, new skills are needed to survive in this highly competitive and fluid age. Furthermore, individuals should be given adequate freedom to be exposed to, decide on and pursue disciplines that are in consonance with how they wish to contribute to their society where there are so many choices.

Model for Social Empathy and Asian Identity through Competency Enhancement (MOSAIC) restructures school level education into two phases:

- Phase 1 (Foundation Phase) includes the teaching of standardised Mathematics and Science across Asia, the learning of one additional Asian language, and community work.
- Phase 2 (Immersion Phase) involves the systematic integration of exposure programmes, by networking with various career sectors as a means of educating students on possible career options before they decide on which university course to pursue.

Speakers featured at the conference include: the guest-of-honour, Yang Berhormat Dato' Dr. Shafie Mohd Salleh, Malaysia's Minister of Higher Education; and the keynote speaker Ms. Leila Retna Komala, Appointed Representative of Dr. Sri Mulyani Indrawati, Minister of State for National Development Planning / Chairperson of National Development Planning Agency (Bappenas), and Deputy Minister of National Development Planning for Human Resources and Cultural Affairs, Indonesia.

Editor's Note:

The Hitachi Young Leaders Initiative is a community relations programme developed and launched by Hitachi in Asia in 1996. The programme aims to identify and groom potential Asian leaders, by

bringing them together to discuss regional issues and establish contacts with prominent regional opinion leaders from the private, public and academic sectors.

The Initiative offers student participants an exceptional platform to broaden their outlook on regional and global issues while promoting a sense of Asian values and cross-cultural understanding. The participating nations are: Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand.

For information on past Initiatives, please visit: www.hyli.com

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