

The Future of Asia We Want: Ideas for the CICA Region

“The Future of Asia Is Now”

I am Asian. We are Asian. We believe in Asia.

Since I was young, I always watched Hollywood movies and listened to music from western countries. I thought – “Those are so cool. We should have one like that, but of course, an Asian version.” I remembered running to my grandfather and asked him for some advice about the Asian version of cool things I’ve seen. My grandfather giggled and said – “Why having an Asian version when we can do more than that!”

My grandfather told me that he wanted to see Asia as a developed continent, equally to western region. He repeated to me, again and again, that we are Asian and we are proud of it. We couldn’t change ourselves. This is who we are and we don’t need to follow anyone. Believe in our capability, design what we want, and do it with passion.

As time passed by, my grandfather passed away. He left with his inspiring quotes.

However, Asia has grown. It seems like it is in its developing phase.

During COVID-19, many countries suffered from the pandemic. Nevertheless, The COVID Performance Index compiled by the Lowy Institute ranked 98 countries’ handling of the COVID-19 outbreak, finding New Zealand performed the best, followed by Vietnam, Taiwan and Thailand. Besides, Thailand was at the top of several lists for effectively responding to COVID-19. One of the secrets is that Thailand provided Multitasking village health volunteers. All over the country, 1,040,000 health volunteers were working in

75,032 villages near and far, and all 77 provinces had a communicable control disease unit.¹ This proves that if we, Asians, have a goal and set our minds to it, we can absolutely achieve it.

The world has changed. It's time to update our thinking beyond Asia's future potential.

The region's emerging and developing economies, poised to expand by 5.3 percent this year, drive the dynamism. These economies are hitting their stride as pandemic supply-chain disruptions fade and the service sector booms. China and India alone are expected to contribute more than half of global growth this year, with the rest of Asia contributing an additional quarter. Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam are all back to their robust pre-pandemic growth.² Therefore, Asia, with all the countries, can create momentum.

From my perspective, there are methods to help developing the future of Asia. The first step is to support creativity. Researchers found that Asian 'tight' cultures are less receptive to foreign ideas. Because of their society's adherence to strict and narrow local norms and rules, people in 'tight' cultures tend to think more narrowly and less globally. But diversity and passion can change this. For example, *Raya and the Last Dragon*, Disney's animated movie, was inspired by Southeast Asian cultures. It was co-written by Vietnamese-American screenwriter and Malaysian screenwriter. Before the pandemic, members of the production team traveled to Laos, Indonesia, Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia, Malaysia and Singapore to learn about their cultures. And of course, the language was not a barrier. The creativity led everyone together.

Asia already accounts for half of the world's 2.2 billion internet users. In the world of internet, everyone is equal. One can express their own feelings and there are rooms for everyone. With unity, we can initiate something new...something powerful. We can generate novel ideas, full of thoughts, opinions, wishes and inspiration, such as create spaces to provide an opportunity

¹ <https://www.bangkokpost.com/opinion/opinion/1939416/7-secrets-of-thai-covid-19-success>

² <https://www.imf.org/en/Blogs/Articles/2023/02/20/asias-easing-economic-headwinds-make-way-for-stronger-recovery>

for young generation to express their ideas. Young people are a vast source of solutions because they were born in a digital era, already interconnected. Asia will be better with help from the young. Giving the aforesaid opportunity will lead them to learn and grow with the pace of the world. And finally, they also can inspire more people.

The second step is to improve the quality of education in Asia. New models of teacher education are needed in developing countries to enhance their competencies. Teacher education should be developed as a whole. Policies and incentives supporting career paths and teacher professional development programs should be articulated in a framework which defines the regulations, structure, and resources required to be a successful teacher.³ Teachers and students could reflect the outcome of previous classes together and design what they yearn for. Exchanging ideas with other countries would be another way to enhance the quality of education system. In my opinion, countries in Asia can exchange more visits of teachers and students in order to try to explore and motivate each other amicably through scholarships and courses.

It would be great to see more Asian 'rising stars' occupying positions in international organizations and in other industries.

Epidemiology is a discipline that has a crucial role in describing health status and analyzing relationships between health and different hazardous agents. So, the third step that we basically need is innovation for everyone's health. One of Sustainable Development Goals is to ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all, at all ages. I suggest and encourage all countries to strengthen primary healthcare systems to reach every child, prioritize in health and well-being, including mental health, and improve pharmaceutical industry.

The last step is re-engineering waste and make it last. We consume too much energy. Together, we can develop this, for instance, by having 100% digital governing, protect the nature, and continue doing it sustainably. Regarding recycling in Korea, there are a lot of strict regulations and policies compared to other countries. Recyclable materials are collected from households and

³ <https://blogs.adb.org/blog/teacher-quality-key-improving-education-asia-and-pacific>

businesses by a centrally managed company. These materials are then sorted and sold to companies that specialize in recycling.⁴ To start the fourth step, I recommend that relevant authorities could organize camps or viral campaigns to raise awareness of people. Starting from little points will create big impacts in the future.

In conclusion, Asia has a massive potential to do everything. Creativity, education, equal healthcare and saving the environment are 4 steps that will make Asia even stronger. All we need to do is start. Press the button and play our Asian-style movie.

I am Asian. We are Asian. We believe in Asia.

The future of Asia is now.

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⁴ <https://seoulspace.com/waste-disposal-recycling-in-korea-full-breakdown/>

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