



Workshop on **Asia-Europe University**

By RUHANA PADZIL, AEI Lecturer

On 29 and 30 January 2004, AEI organized a workshop with the aim to prepare an initial proposal for the development of the AEI into the Asia-Europe University (AEU), and to discuss the university's thrust areas. The workshop which was chaired by AEI Executive Director, Y.Bhg. Professor Dato' Dr. Shaharil Talib, was attended by experienced academics from various fields. Amongst the participants were Y. Bhg. Dato' Dr. Mohd. Yusof Ahmad, Director General of the Institute of Diplomacy and Foreign Relations (IDFR), Y.Bhg. Tan Sri Dato' Ajit Singh, Distinguished Research Fellow of AEI and Puan Siti Radziah, Senior Assistant Director, Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Education, Malaysia. Other participants from various universities within Asia and Europe were also present. They included Associate Professor Dr. Azmi Sharom, Faculty of Law, University Malaya, Professor Dr. Yilmaz Akyuz, Dr. Fatimah Kari, Faculty of Economics and Administration, University of Malaya,

Professor Rajah Rasiah, Institute for New Technologies, United Nations University, The Netherlands, Professor Arthur Mol and Professor David Sonnenfeld from Wageningen University, The Netherlands, Professor Luca Papi, Professor Peppe Canullo from University of Ancona, Italy, Professor Fernando Rodrigo Universidad Autonoma de Madrid, Professor Antony Bryant from Leeds Metropolitan University, United Kingdom, Professor Jonathan Liu from Middlesex University, United Kingdom and Associate Professor Gareth A Richards from the University of the Philippines, Diliman. The workshop saw the contribution of valuable ideas for the development of the Asia-Europe Institute into the Asia-Europe University.

At the first session of the workshop the Executive Director of AEI, Professor Dato' Dr. Shaharil Talib gave an overview of AEI's development and projects to prove that AEI is ready and competent to transform itself into the AEU. Professor Shaharil stressed that

CONTENTS

Features

- 1 Workshop on Asia-Europe University**
Ruhana Padzil

Cultural Programme

- 3 January to March 2004**
Priya Narayanan

AEI Alumni Network

- 4 Interview** *Mamiko Hada*
- 10 Excerpts from the 2004 Students Yearbook**
John Paul Ruiz Petines

An Intellectual Exchange

- 13 Bicara at Déjeuner**
Ash Abu Hassan
- 15 Dr Renio Lecture** *Manique AE Cooray*
- 16 Presentation by Ms Sheau Ching**
Manique AE Cooray
- 16 Visiting Professors** *Manique AE Cooray*

AEI has played an important role in building the strong knowledge networks both inter-and-intra regional. The Asian-Europe collaboration in academia will give birth to generations of Asians and Europeans who are deeply knowledgeable and comfortable with each other, thus forging Asia-Europe relationships in diverse areas. This is vastly different from student exchange programmes or having Europeans studying in Asian universities. The AEU will bring together Europe and Asia in curricula and faculty as well as students sharing a multicultural learning experience.

The new system of education is expected to be beneficial for Malaysia as a contribution towards the noble vision of student and scholar exchanges, with the view of developing a better understanding of cultures, histories and business practices of both regions. AEI has emerged as a novel international hub promoting the idea of internalization, liberalization and democratization through faculty exchange, student mobility and research collaboration.

Following the original plan AEU will be established as a multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary postgraduate institute rather than faculties, designated according to multidisciplinary knowledge hubs institutes. In order to define the direction of the future AEU, four parallel sessions were organized on:

- Overview on the establishment of Asia-Europe University and the development of Research

Thrust Areas

- Capacity Building & Teaching and Supervision
- Staff Exchange
- Institutional Support and Funding

Research Thrust Areas

In the second round of the first session of the workshop the discussion focused on the development of AEU as an exciting, pioneering and learning-centre university dedicated to the pursuit of research excellence. The prospect of enhancing research excellence has been a primary objective behind the establishment of the new University, and will remain a major objective. In key areas it promises to create the kind of 'critical mass' research capability that sustains world-class infrastructure and expertise. AEU will be a focal point for social science research where qualified academics and user groups can collaborate on long term projects. As such the AEU will have a strategy to implement a number of interrelated research priorities, and develop as a hub of regional research and innovation network of genuine national and international quality and significance.

Overall, the working group finally agreed that the main objective of the organization of research at the AEU would be to advance research in the social sciences that has special significance for the countries of Asia and Europe. The AEU also aims to balance the demands of basic theoretical and conceptual research with strategic and applied research that is relevant to policy formulation and problem solving. Besides that, AEU will provide high quality research on issues of importance to business, the public sector and government, and the wider community. The issues considered include economic competitiveness, sustainability, the effectiveness of public services and policy, community development and the quality of life. Research at the AEU will be structured in four priority areas:

- Globalisation, Regional Integration and Development
- Multiculturalism and Community Development
- Labour, Environment and Social Movement
- Business Networks, Knowledge Management and Competitiveness

Capacity Building & Teaching and Supervision

During the second discussion the working group designed the role of the AEU as a postgraduate centre of a teaching and learning in the social sciences. The rationale for the formation of a teaching centre is important to fulfill the growing need for university graduates who are cosmopolitan and internationally-oriented. The curricula, faculty and student body at the AEU will enable this internalization and genuine collaboration between Asia and Europe will be reflected in the content of the degrees awarded. It is envisaged that the degrees awarded by the AEU will also be dual or joint degrees between identified



Prof Dato' Dr
Shaharil Talib



Dato' Dr Mohd
Yusof Ahmad



Tan Sri Dato' Ajit
Singh



Prof Rajah Rasiah



Prof Peppe Canullo



Prof Arthur Mol



Prof Gareth A
Richards



Prof Fernando
Rodrigo



Prof Antony Bryant



Associate Prof Dr
Azmi Sharom



Prof Jonathan Liu



Prof David
Sonnenfeld



Puan Siti Radziah



Prof Luca Papi



Dr Fatimah Kari

Asian and European universities, depending on the field or focus of expertise.

These multidisciplinary research centres will provide the pedagogical vision for the AEU's teaching and learning work, and work closely with the related research cluster in order to ensure complementary and relevance of the degree programmes. The students of AEU are given the choice to study either full time, part time, by distributed learning and external (distance) learning.

Institutional Support and Funding

The last day of the workshop session summed up the discussion on the structure and objectives of the Asia-Europe University. The main issues discussed during the last session include institutional support and funding for the AEU. Currently, the Malaysian Government is the solely collaborator by providing infrastructure facilities, RM3.8 million per annum and human resources. However, in the future the AEU should be financed by hosting governments and universities, with possible outlets where funds could be obtained from ASEM member countries to cover the operational costs. In order to support the research and teaching activities of the AEU a full range of services and facilities will be provided. The important services such as the Resource Centre will serve as the working library and information services provider to support the teaching and research conducted at AEU. It will support all subject areas taught and researched AEU. The other services identified as important support for AEU are computing services, External Affairs Office, Business Links, Community Links and Student Services.

In conclusion, the two-day workshop successfully combined the brilliant ideas from the experienced academicians to assist in the formation and the establishment of the AEU and indirectly position Malaysia as a globally respected Centre of Excellence in Education. ■

Cultural Programme for January, February and March 2004

By PRIYA NARAYANAN, AEI

January

- 7th - Ruslan and Ludmilla (Russia, 1972)
- 14th - Yadon Ilaheya (Palestine/France, 2002)
- 28th - Chiedemi Se Sono Felice (Italy, 2001)

February

- 4th - Can't Live Without Robbery (Korea, 2002)
- 11th - Tanging Yaman (Phillipines, 2001)
- 18th - Diamond Arm (Russia, 1968)
- 25th - Bata Bata Panno Ka Ginawa? (Phillipines, 1998)

March

- 3rd - Nicholas Nickleby (UK, 2002)
- 10th - Ring O (Japan, 2003)

- 17th - Four Feathers (Canada, 2002)
- 24th - Dil Chahta Hai (India, 2001)
- 31st - Entre Marx Y Una Mujer Desnuda,
(Ecuador, 1996)

The Cultural Programme 2004 thus far has been business as usual with AEI continuing to screen an eclectic mix of world cinema. The past quarter saw screenings from Latin America, the Indian Subcontinent, Europe and Asia. All the films continue to be well-received by our attending audiences and the numbers seem to be growing with each week! The films screened last quarter continue to embody AEI's promise to showcase movies reflecting upon society, culture, politics and the human experience irrespective of language, geography or race. As always, we hope to show that through film, barriers between cultures, peoples and states might be crossed. ■



Interviews: AEI Alumni Network

By MAMIKO HADA, former AEI Senior Research Assistant currently residing in the U.S. (E-mail: mhada@vzavenue.net)



Nereida

Q: Please tell me a little bit about your background before joining AEI. What brought you to Malaysia?

A: My hometown, Durres, is a peaceful Albanian town stretching along the Eastern coast of the Adriatic Sea. Albania, as were most Eastern European countries, was part of the Communist Block. It was not until 1990 that the country was set free of the Communist regime and that people could finally start living their lives without worrying who was spying on them and whether they were committing any crime against the proletariat by watching American cartoons on the Italian TV.

I was in high school when the country was going through the transition period of changing its regime, its mentality, its infrastructure and all that was old. When I was 18 I took the entrance exam to the Faculty of Foreign Languages, English Department at the University of Tirana, Albania. Soon I was accepted to the university with the major in English Language and Literature, minoring in German Language. After almost two years at the University of Tirana, I was offered the opportunity to study abroad. This was a dream of every student in Albania, since before the fall of Communism, we were not allowed to leave the country. The world was supposed to be our enemy but everybody seemed to love and long for the enemy.

University of Malaya was offering full scholarships to two Albanian students. I was very excited at the prospect of studying, traveling and living in Asia. I remember going to the city library to look up the *Britannica* Encyclopedia on Malaysia. I was already happy to know that there was so much sea around Malaysia. It was November 1996 when I arrived in Malaysia, I was 20.

I joined AEI in June 2001. The Institute was organizing International Law Conference and there was a need for someone with a legal background to help organize and coordinate the Conference. I was recommended for the post by one of my professors at the Faculty of Law. As I was still studying, my

contract was only to last for a maximum three months.

Q: What projects did you work on while at AEI?

A: The main project was the International Law Conference. However, that was going to take place in early September. Thus besides working on the organization of the Conference, I was also involved in the coordination of the Campus Abroad project organized by the Institute as well as assisting in a team project on the economic strategies of European companies in Malaysia headed by Dr Giovanni Capannelli, then-Fellow-In-Residence. Working at AEI has been an absolutely valuable experience, where I learned to work as a team with people from different backgrounds and cultures. I had previously done some internships in Malaysia, but they were in Malaysian companies. My work experience at AEI was truly international and that was very interesting.

Q: What did you study at UM? And how did you learn Bahasa Melayu? Any other languages you picked up while you were at UM?

A: When I was offered the scholarship at UM, I had three choices of major; Engineering, Computer Science and Law. It was clear to me that I was not going to take up any engineering course; everybody in my family is an engineer and it would not suit my character of 'black sheep' to choose the same. I was immediately attracted by the idea that one day I could be a lawyer, so the choice was clear. I was very eager to start and go to lectures; however I was not admitted as a freshman yet. There was a prerequisite to the admission at the University to be fluent in Bahasa Malaysia. This was as much a challenging as an exotic task. Bahasa Malaysia has no similarities to Albanian, English, Italian or even to German. Soon I was sitting in my Bahasa classes where I met some of the nicest people, some of whom remain my best friends to this day. In April of 1998 I sat for the Bahasa Malaysia Proficiency Exam where I was awarded a 'Lulus dengan Cemerlang' or an 'A' in the Western grading system.

I was ready to start my legal studies and I couldn't

wait. The semester started at the end of May that same year. While the course at the Law Faculty was going on, the law students were required to complete several credit hours from courses outside my faculty. As I am good at learning new languages, I decided to pick up the old name of my collection, French. I had very basic knowledge of the language so I thought it would be great to use this opportunity to brush up and learn some more. Since I was doing quite well in classes, I enrolled in more French courses at the Alliance Francaise, the French cultural and language center in Kuala Lumpur. I studied there for almost one year. Now I am very happy to have made that effort in my University days.

Q: Can you give us a comparison of the academic institutions that you know in Albania and UM?

A: In Albania, universities are still mainly owned by the government and therefore free of fees of any kind. There are very difficult entrance exams and every applicant must know in advance what his/her field of study will be in order to sit for the entrance exam of the desired faculty. Once the student has been accepted, it is a whole new world. The university becomes a place where you can grow in all the possible dimensions. The focus of the study is not about scoring in exams but rather learning and applying what is learnt. I found that in Malaysia, university students are a bit shy to speak up and to share their opinions with the rest of the class. They would rather not say anything. I find that in Albania, students are at ease about discussing and exchanging their opinions concerning studies.

In Malaysia, I was impressed by the quality of lectures and the amazing amount of information available, especially the law library. I also learned to appreciate living in the same room with complete strangers, who would be quiet and not tell me that I should take off my shoes before entering the room. Apart from the so-called culture shocks of living with my roommates, I had a very good time practising Bahasa, learning about the life style of the Malaysians as well as *balik kampung* (going home) with them for *Hari Raya*.

Q: Now tell me what you have done after leaving AEI/UM.

A: When I left AEI in mid September 2001, I had one month of holiday before the new semester started. I decided to go to *Perhentian Kecil* Island, a pearl in the South China Sea, to take up scuba diving.

The course lasted four days and I had so much fun exploring the magical underwater world.

I had another year of studies ahead of me and this is what is known as the professional year, where law students learn a bit more about the practical and procedural part of the profession. It was a tough year, long hours at the faculty, long hours to study and prepare for the next day's classes or next assignments. I am glad I made it out of final year in one piece, because it was truly hard work. After I had taken my last exam in March 2003 I was more than ready to start a long and adventurous holiday, get ready to say 'good bye' to Malaysia and move on.

Q: Can you tell me more about your travels? Where did you go? What did you do? What are the most memorable places and incidents?

A: Although I had been living in Malaysia for more than six years, I had not really had a chance to cross the borders of Malaysia. Up to that time, I had spent most of my holidays to travel within Malaysia, going home to visit my parents or even doing several vacation internships in Kuala Lumpur. So I was really eager to visit Thailand and Indonesia most of all. I wanted to wait and attend my graduation ceremony, which was going to take place in August and then leave Malaysia for good. I had many months ahead.

I started off with Thailand. It was a one-week trip to Phuket and Krabi. The trip was planned so that it would coincide with the Thai New Year, where locals and foreigners alike celebrate by throwing water at each other. Everybody was on the street totally soaked but happy. I managed to do some more diving near Phi Phi Islands at Maya Bay made famous by the movie "The Beach". Due to its Hollywood popularity, a lot of tourist boats were coming there all day and the sea was very dirty with plastic bottles and bags and all sorts of litter. It was nice to dive under water but once on the surface the magic was gone. I felt sorry for the place, if only people were less selfish and try to leave behind something that others could enjoy as well.

When I got back to Kuala Lumpur I had a little more than a month of my student visa. I thought it would be a good opportunity to do an internship for a month. I applied to PricewaterhouseCoopers (PWC) for a vacation trainee and was accepted at the Indirect Tax Department. Clearly, one month is not long enough to learn all the aspects of taxation, but it was a good experience in the way that it gave me an opportunity to work in a highly professional environment as well as to have an idea about the profession itself for future

employment possibilities. At the moment I still prefer to pursue the legal career.

The days at PWC went by fast and it was again time for a trip. This time it was Vietnam. It was the peak of the SARS scare but I already had bought my ticket many months before and I was determined to use it. I compromised by not visiting the South of the country where the virus was more widely spread. The Vietnam trip was special because out of the three weeks in the country, I cycled around the Northwestern part of it on my mountain bike. I was traveling with my husband and the two of us would wake up early every morning for two weeks, ride all day sometimes well after sunset and then stop in a small town for the night. It was surely a very demanding trip, as we just couldn't afford to get sick or weak. By the time the trip was over we had covered more than 700 km. The country is very beautiful, pristine and full of history. When we would stop for breaks during the ride in some small village, the people and especially the kids would surround us and curiously inspect our gear and look at us like inhabitants from a faraway planet. This trip has a special place in my Asian memoir.

My husband, Remy and I had just registered our marriage with the *Pejabat Pendaftaran Negara* before we left for Vietnam, so when we returned to KL, we decided to have a small party with our friends. We had a great time meeting our friends for one last time before leaving for good.

Next on the agenda was Bali. I was so excited to get there after the almost impossible mission of getting a visa. Bali is a place that almost everybody I know, especially in Malaysia, has visited at least once. When I got there I could see for myself why the place has charmed so many people. We spent our days surfing on Kuta beach and looking at the amazing scenery off Ulu Watu on the Southern coast. Bali is also a favorite paragliding spot. Pilots from all over the world go there to fly off the cliff and over the ocean at Timbis point. We didn't miss the chance to visit the craft towns of Bali famed for their intricate carving work on the beautiful teak furniture. Last but not least were the dance performances of the Balinese. They are generally based on Hindu mythology. A popular dance is the *Kecak* dance, which takes its name from the sound that the dancers make as they sit in circles around the center place where the story is being told through a dance and colorful masks complete with white and red monkeys. Bali remains a must for whoever travels in the area.

Next I must tell you about my trip to Sabah. As

a diver it was my dream to one day dive in Sipadan. This is a small resort island off the Southeastern coast of Sabah. I spent four nights in Sipadan doing nothing but diving. There were turtles and sharks all over the place; all sorts of colorful fish and of course many little "Nemos". After we left Sipadan we remained in Sabah ready for another adventure; climb up Mount Kinabalu. The climb was hard and the weather cold (I almost couldn't believe this was Malaysia, with *Matsallehs* left and right and temperatures below 20 degrees). When we were back in Kuala Lumpur I had problems walking straight for a few days but I had a great feeling of achievement all about me.

Besides these trips, I had a ten-day motorbike trip to Thailand where my husband and I did an average of 600km a day and went all the way to the Golden Triangle. We had a stop over in Bangkok en route to Switzerland where I went Paragliding in the royal city of Petchaburi, about three hours south of Bangkok.

Q: You were in Malaysia for seven years, which is a lot longer than most of the expatriates spend in one country. What were your experiences like in Malaysia? You must have witnessed a lot of changes in Malaysia during those seven years.

A: Malaysia is the best introduction to Asia for any Westerner who travels in the region for the first time. It is neither the sterile Singapore nor the chaotic Bangkok; Kuala Lumpur is indeed what people call a 'happening' city. There is a wonderful mix of people, culture, languages and of course the great variety of food. During my stay in Malaysia I had been most impressed by the amazingly fast growth and improvement of infrastructure in the country and especially in KL. I used to admire Singapore for its convenient public transport system, but I can say that Kuala Lumpur has picked up at the speed of light.

Q: Where are you currently, and what are your plans in the future?

A: We are spending the ski season in Chamonix, the town at the bottom of Europe's highest mountain, Mont Blanc. My husband and I had not been in a proper skiing holiday for years and since neither of us is currently employed, we thought it would be the best time to take some time off and enjoy the snow, skiing and snowboarding. However it is only a holiday and soon we have to look for jobs. When I was at UM, I was very interested in a specific field of law known as Intellectual Property, which has to do with trademarks, patents, copyrights and so on.

I plan to work in Switzerland and there seems to be quite an established line of business with regard to my interest. I believe that I will need further training for this profession, but it is quite common that the company that employs would give such a training to its employees. It will be interesting to start work and I can say that I am looking forward to this new chapter in my life.

Q: What do you think you gained from your experiences in Malaysia? What do you think Malaysia gained from your presence?

A: I believe I have gained more than I ever thought I would. It has been a wonderful growing and discovering journey for me. I am thankful to all the parties that made it possible for me to go and study in Malaysia. I am thankful for all the people I have met and I will always cherish their friendships. I have gained Bahasa Malaysia, which is quite similar to Bahasa Indonesia, the language of the third most populated country in the world. And my favorite language play routine was when I would go to markets or even when I visited places out of Kuala Lumpur. Thinking that an *orang putih* (white person) would not understand Malay, the locals would go on talking in Malay about me or the bargaining strategy that they were going to employ, and then I would say something in Malay, especially in the Northern slang, which my friends had taught me, and you would see their jaw drop... *'Oh, pandai cakap Melayu!'* (She can speak Malay!). I always had so much fun in such situations, and I always got a good discount!

I have wonderful memories of places and events throughout the region. As a child in school we studied the geography of the Southeast Asia. It always fascinated me to see that so many little islands could make up a country, and it also frustrated me because it was hard to know by heart all the difficult names of the places. Now I look back at those days with a little laugh, thinking that life sometimes takes funny turns, and you never know where you will end up one day. Overall my memory of Malaysia will always be a nice one; in fact I don't intend to leave it a memory as I would love to go there again. Maybe this time as a real expatriate!

Q: Any message to the current AEI students and friends?

A: AEI is a perfect learning place with great facilities and high expertise of its teaching staff. I wish all the students would enjoy their days at the Institute

and to the foreign students to make the best out of their time by visiting the country and discovering the beauty of Malaysia. You will be enriched! To my friends that I have met at AEI: Thanks for being there for me and let's stay in touch!



Christoph

Q: Please tell me your background before joining AEI. What brought you to AEI? Tell me when you joined AEI and when you left.

A: When I had my first contact with the AEI, I was studying in Bolzano, Italy - a small new university located right in the middle of the Alps Mountains. I pursued my first degree in International Economics, where Paolo Magagnotti, Prof. Alfred Steinherr and Sonja Steinbrech organized a study-trip to Asia ("Young Europe meets Asia" - *Understanding Social and Economic Changes in Asia*). We covered India, Malaysia and China - while we were guest students at AEI during our stay in Kuala Lumpur. Being Bolzano's student representative at that time, I met and talked with a lot of people- and thus happened to talk myself into furthering my Asia experiences. While at AEI, I happened to casually speak with Prof. Giovanni Capannelli about a possible future internship at AEI - expecting an outright refusal, since undergraduates usually don't get to work in post-grad facilities. To my surprise he just asked me to submit my CV, and to specify the time in which I wanted to come - having done this, I then joined AEI in July 2002, working there until August 2002.

Q: What projects did you work on while at AEI?

A: I planned to work on Prof Capannellis project "Presence and Strategies of European Companies in Asia". In this framework of work previously done by Giovanni Capannelli, I started working on my diploma thesis - comparing the ASEAN automotive industry under the light of the ASEAN Free Trade Area. Together with Ralph Becker, at that time a fellow research assistant from Luxemburg and today a fellow alumni in the ASEF University Alumni Network I travelled to Singapore and Bangkok, Thailand to conduct interviews with car importers, car companies, chambers of commerce and individual government agencies - not to forget academicians from Chulalongkorn University and the University of Malaya. In Singapore I received great support from the Italian Chamber of Commerce - Marijohn Sampson - who helped me a lot in understanding some of the intrinsic particularities of the ASEAN market situation.

Q: How does your experience in Malaysia help you now and in the future?

A: It has helped me so far, in the sense that I learned to accept that things which are under construction follow a different set of rules. Being from an industrialized nation, roaming around in developing countries offered a lot of adventures and asked for a lot of flexibility, especially during my quest for data of whatever kind. One learns to respect other mindsets; or more accurately put, one stops asking these very often-misleading “Why do they do things differently” questions. Since Malaysia, I have been very much at ease with differences and tolerance towards living conditions - and all the time, I have felt a great sense of satisfaction to know that being a developing country means that it is striving to change, trying to grow and becoming more stable, while searching for more ideas and people. I often felt great satisfaction from the conversations I had with my dear roommates Nazli and Ramli - and others at the AEI - often all of us seemed to feel very grateful to learn from each other on such an informal basis. I loved being in a society which is not satisfied but eager to achieve endless and unlimited consummation. Malaysia, as well as the other Asian nations that I have been to have always given and still give me the feeling that they need a lot of work and effort to go into their economic, legal and social foundations. Being an element in such a process, to me, is more satisfying than to fine-tune and re-adjust the framework which is inherent in the industrialized nations. too many necessary things are still to be done - in comparison to Europe, where there are certainly many necessary things as well, while completely on a different scale.

Q: What do you think Malaysia gained from your presence? What were your contributions?

A: I talked a lot with people, whether this rather annoyed and upset people. I guess conversing with people, casually over lunch/dinner or coffee is the most efficient way of giving and gaining knowledge and ideas. About contributions in a materialistic sense - the paper/diploma thesis which is being written from the information gathered last year is still due, and will be released to the AEI as soon as I finish it. In my thesis I am currently intending to create a relationship to China, in the sense that I am considering a set of possible future developments of the region. ASEAN+3 (which is practically an “integrated Asia”) in comparison to the current trend where each Asian nation tends to focus, rather on bi-lateral agreements than on regional integration, is one of them. Some general points on FDI behavior towards developing countries /

emerging economies - in terms of political & legal stability (regional stability), political freedom but also from a managerial and investors perspective shall be considered. In this respect, I guess, to have contributed by adding one little piece to the big picture build of millions of different individual mind-sets.

Q: You said you returned to Italy first before you traveled to China. What’s your major at school? Did you finish your first degree already? If not, when do you plan to finish it? (here, maybe you wish to explain a bit about European education system—it’s being changed to be more standardized all over EU, isn’t it?)

A: My major used to be International Economics, while I changed courses and am now studying Economics and Management, the new course being part of Italy’s reformed university system. I plan to complete my first degree by late summer 2004.

All over the European Union, a new and more harmonized university system is being developed, and this new system is going to be much closer in structure to the systems commonly found in the United Kingdom or the United States. The new Italian system offers 3 year Bachelor classes (laurea breve) and a variety of one, two or three year masters as well as PhD degree courses after that.

Q: I think your university will be of interest to AEI students. Can you tell me about your university, where it’s located, the student body, its history, etc? What made you decide to study at your university (which I understand is located in Italy)?

A: As already mentioned before, it’s located in Bolzano, which is the capital city of South Tyrol, a small bilingual (German and Italian) province in Italy’s north. The university itself was founded in 1998 and has just inaugurated its new buildings. In terms of student body, it is very small, but the university offers very good facilities. A top-notch library, new classrooms and good technical equipment. In terms of teaching, most professors are recruited on a yearly basis - more than 50% of the teaching staff is not from Italy and thus assures a great variance in the scope taught to students. The professors are mostly recruited from German speaking and Italian universities, while a large number, varying from year to year, comes from the UK and from the US, respectively. The syllabus is tri-lingual, i.e. courses are taught in English, German and Italian languages, each making up one third of the study curriculum. For example, if a course is taught in Italian, the exam will have to be taken in

Italian as well). Apart from usual structural problems associated with any new facility, it is an unusual place to study - and incredibly beautiful in terms of nature and climate.

Q: Can you give us a comparison of the academic institutions that you know in your home country and AEI?

A: In fact, I cannot - I have never been part of any Germany based academic institution - this might change in the future, but so far, I have been ignorant of my home country in that respect.

Q: Now tell me what you have done after leaving AEI.

A: After some family visits in Germany, I went back to Bolzano, preparing for exams as well as my semester abroad. This semester abroad started in October, 2003 when I studied in Turin, in Piedmont province, close to the French border to the west of Italy. Here I had a chance to be a guest listener in a Mandarin Course (apart from my regular courses in economics) offered by the Oriental Department of my university in Turin (*Universita degli Studi di Torino*). Although I have to admit that my knowledge of Mandarin remained little, this was when I was tempted by the prospect of going to China for the second time, already. The first time was during my studies in Malaysia, where almost every interviewee referred to the unclear Chinese development - in regard to where the big car producers will invest. Today its obvious, FDI declines all over ASEAN, while its on a constant rise in China, with huge invested amounts in the automotive industry. All this in the back of my mind, I then applied for an internship position - which was granted to me almost immediately.

Q: You have been in China for a while. Can you tell me more about what you've been doing in China? What are your assignments and what's the arrangement? (is it an internship through your university?) What are the most memorable places and incidents?

A: In April 2003 I went to Xi'an in Shaanxi Province, China - working for a small joint venture consisting of Siemens and a Chinese company manufacturing railroad equipment. Not willing to go back home in August, I applied for another joint venture in Shenzhen, again through Siemens but this time with a company manufacturing medical equipment. The internships have both been organized by myself - the first internship I replied to an ad while I organized the second one myself by approaching the

person in charge directly. My tasks are limited to the usual things that interns do, since contractual terms are too short as to allow me for more responsibility. Specifically, I have been working in Marketing & Sales and Quality Assurance, while having had glances of Procurement (Supply Chain), Finance and Accounting and Human Resource Management.

Since September, after having attended my university's exam session, I have been working in Shenzhen - and while "the road is bumpy at times", I enjoy very much living on Shenzhen University's Campus, taking my bicycle every morning to the adjoining hi-tech park.

I find most impressive and stunning the differences between the ancient Chinese culture until the end of the 19th century, and the the more contemporary Chinese society after 1979. It helped me question many stereotypes of mine especially towards socialism and communism and revise them-leading to the daunting thought, that human beings are different on first sight, while basically being very much the same no matter under which label we come.

Q: What are your plans for the future?

A: In February I have been granted a small scholarship by the Asia Europe Foundation to attend a meeting of 40 students on economic subjects in Manila, Philippines - discussing business proposals and general economic in uences between Asia and Europe - to which I am very much looking forward. There will be 20 from Asia and 20 from Europe, while no more than two sharing one nationality.

In the mid-term future- depending on coincidence, destiny and faith, which includes, of course, demand for my education, skills and background - I would like to go into consulting, especially areas dealing with questions of outsourcing, supply chain management, market research and all related matters, preferably in China or Southeast Asia with a strong relation to Italy and Germany, because those are the places I have experiences in. Pursuing a master's or PhD degree is not out of the question, while I would like to make this a matter of circumstance once the time comes.

Q: Any message to the current AEI students and friends?

A: Go to Perhentian Island, Terenganu State - and forget Langkawi. Visit Bangkok and go for TukTuk races while having some shirts tailored for yourself. And ask those you might have hurt while being too enthusiastic, for forgiveness and understanding. ■

Excerpts from the 2004 Students Yearbook

In a few months time, all twenty-eight students from fourteen nations will graduate from the International Masters Programmes of the Asia-Europe Institute.

All of us will cherish the memories we have shared and experienced during our ten-month stay in Malaysia.

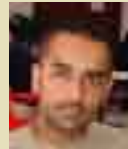
More than our academic achievements, the friendships we have cultivated here at the University will forever remain in our minds and our hearts.

Let us give you extracts from the 2004 Students Yearbook.

By JOHN PAUL RUIZ PETINES, AEI IMIM Student



“Allowed me to respect others, build lasting friendships, and live life to the fullest!” – Atik (Indonesia)



“New experience, different cultures, special friendships” – Faris (Yemen)



“Best place to study regional integration!” – Au (Vietnam)



“A great year with the greatest people. Definitely one of my best experience!” – Carlos (Spain)



“Created an avenue for knowledge exchange among international students.” – Dean (Malaysia)



“An opportunity to nurture friendships with people of diverse cultures.” – JP (Philippines)



“Students were provided with different perspectives about learning. It was indeed an enriching experience.” – Marina (Malaysia)



“Taught me a valuable lesson on what life is all about – hardwork!” – Nora (Malaysia)





“I have learned a great deal of things from this experience. This is true Regional Integration!”
– Olivia (Zimbabwe)



“Computer modeling in the morning, Japanese political economy in the afternoon – what a diversification!” – Ranga (Sri Lanka)



“Allowed me to understand and respect other cultures.”
– Tuah (Malaysia)



“A rich and unique experience in friendships, discovery, and understanding that leads to the ‘rainbow road’ of tolerance” – Romain (France)



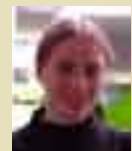
“Professors and students from different nations gave me valuable experience which I will always treasure.”
– Taufik (Indonesia)



“A lab for testing new kinds of Asia-Europe relations.”
– Eneko (Spain)



“Incredible! Malaysia truly Asia!” – Chaiyot (Thailand)



“Unique possibilities.”
– Maria (Italy)



“Where East and West reach a marvelous blend.”
– Gustavo (Spain)



“Working in tons of assignments contributed to my personal transformation.” – Kiki (Indonesia)



“An unforgettable experience.” – Luong (Vietnam)



“A new concept of studying that I’ve never experienced before.” – Phuong (Vietnam)

“Work, work, work, and more work. The highlights of higher education.” – Michael (Malaysia)



“Experiencing Asia and the mixture of culture.” – Minna (Finland)



“Different cultural exchanges” – Hung (Vietnam)



“Studying in tight environments – an exciting experience!” – Rofiq (Indonesia)



“Exploring an integrated Europe in Asia.” – Min Shen (China)



“Integration of Western and Asian civilizations” – Razif (Malaysia)



“An exchange of Asia-Europe cultures and experiences.” – Song (Cambodia)



“Unforgettable year of beautiful experiences.” – Ramon (Spain)

Bicara at Déjeuner

[Discussion Over Lunch]

By ASH ABU HASSAN, AEI Research Assistant

Olav Juul Sorensen



Even though *Bicara at Déjeuner's* objective is to invite speakers who are successful entrepreneurs, be them Europeans or Asians who are doing business in Malaysia, the month of January saw some special arrangement of the lunch-cum-discussion program. The program had Olav Juul Sorensen, a Professor of International Business Economics, Department of Business Studies, Aalborg University, Denmark to give a talk to the university staff and students on Thursday, 19th January. The title of our *Bicara* that day was Enhancing Competitiveness through International Collaboration: The Case of Company Learning. While he is in no way an entrepreneur, if one observed his curriculum vitae, one should consider him as someone who is credible to speak on the world of entrepreneurship based on the breadth and depth of experience that he has on the subject.

What Professor Sorensen had shared with the audience during *Bicara*, was basically the findings of his current research that he is conducting on Danish companies doing business and based in Malaysia. In particular, Professor Sorensen's subject that afternoon was the learning process from each other between companies of the two countries, namely, Denmark and Malaysia. According to him, the organization culture in Malaysia and Denmark is so different that the Danish people seem to have a bit of a culture shock. For example, the Danish entrepreneurs are so used to an open and individualistic concept of working relationship back home that they find it hard to work in an environment that is very hierarchical and conformist.

Furthermore, he also talked about localizing the multinational companies (MNCs) and this in turn can evolve into Public-Private Partnership (the partnerships between public and business institutions). One of the interesting points that he had brought up during his presentation was that the international business community, in particular in Malaysia, has to find a way to integrate China in the globalization outburst so that Malaysia and China can survive together. He went on further by saying that the international business community has to look at the dynamic aspects of the relationship, as it is not static.

On the learning process, he introduced a new concept of learning: single loop where an organization can learn and practise what others have been practising meaning

follow the slow or double loop learning process where an organization gets rid of the normal/former values and adopt completely other new values.

While *Bicara* went past the time limit, the audience did enjoy Professor Sorensen's interesting and eye-opening talk on the analysis of the learning process of business organizations.

Jari Silventoinen



On 11 February, 2004 *Bicara at Déjeuner* invited Mr Jari Silventoinen, President of Malaysia-Finnish Business Council and also Managing Director of JEKS Engineering Sdn Bhd. His talk entitled European Perspective: A Private Entrepreneur's Experience of Doing Business in Malaysia was an interesting talk in which he shared his personal experience as a foreign entrepreneur doing business in Malaysia and having lived in several countries in the Southeast Asian region beginning from 1982 until now.

Mr Silventoinen's expertise is in civil engineering and JEKS Engineering is a construction company whose core business idea is

"HIGH TECH CONSTRUCTION, USING METHODS, SYSTEMS AND EQUIPMENT, WHICH IMPROVE PRODUCTIVITY AND QUALITY AND DECREASE NUMBER OF WORKERS AT CONSTRUCTION SITES"

With a vision like this and a whole new mode of construction, building construction in Malaysia will never be the same. Among the quite well known buildings constructed by JEKS Engineering are IKEA in Mutiara Damansara, which was built in 8 months, and Jaya Jusco in Kepong, which was built in 60 days.

Among the difficulties encountered by the this construction company were legal issues such as the collection of payments from developers once the construction is done. According to Mr Silventoinen's experience, in Europe, honoring terms is a practice whereas in Asian countries, late or non-payment is the way to go. Eventhough the collection can be made through the court systems, the procedure takes a long time and it is slow with the offender not being punished accordingly or blacklisted; and after all the hassle, payment is not a certainty.

Mr Silventoinen then went on to talk about transfer of technology (ToT) whereby he gave examples of two case studies of one company in Europe and another in Malaysia. In the European company's case, he showed the audience how ToT can bring big growth, success, and profit to the practising company. On the other hand, the reasons ToT is not sustainable in Malaysia are that 1) there are no common policies in which the governing agencies are weak and unorganized, 2) not many 'willing receivers', 3) no enforcement of policies, and in addition to these unfavorable conditions, 4) the systematic training is just about to begin. As a result, the industry's profitability is not stable and technology level is questionable. One interesting point that was brought up during his talk was that from his point of view, what might help the ToT and introduction of new products to flourish in Malaysia is by hiring less foreign workers, have changes in the enforcement of government policies, and finally a high demand for high quality constructions.

Finally, from his experience of 10 years involvement in the business world, Mr Silventoinen concluded that there are minuses and pluses of doing business in Europe and Asia. The plusses are such the more stable European business environment, working/organized legal framework, and technology driven business domination. The setback in the business world in Europe, however, is the low growth caused by stagnation in the business of the old industries. In Asia, on the other hand, the plusses are the more volatile and price driven business environment, and high growth caused by more opportunities for new businesses in old industries. However, as mentioned before, the legal framework's weakness does cause some uncertainties in doing business in Malaysia.

Vivek Rao



On 10 March, 2004 as it is customary here at AEI being the 2nd Wednesday of the month, *Bicara at Déjeuner* went on as scheduled. This time we had Mr Vivek Rao, Country Manager of Knowledge Solutions Business NIIT Malaysia Sdn Bhd as *Bicara's* speaker. NIIT's core business is in software and education. A US\$167 million global ICT corporation, NIIT has built up an impressive array of global customers based on its strengths in these markets. Its clientele ranges from Fortune 1000 companies to state governments in several countries such as India, Malaysia, and Singapore. A self-proclaim 'people's company', NIIT invests extensively in recruiting, nurturing, and retaining the 'best of the best global talent'.

Three IIT Delhi graduates who got together and decided to create a 'unique company with a revolutionary mission' with their pioneering vision of 'bringing people and computers together' founded the company in 1981. Like not so many business organizations, NIIT's

dedication to people is evident in some groundbreaking work with school children, running computer education projects in four state governments in India, establishing computer kiosks for kids in the slum areas, and finally the Swift Jyoti For Women, a training program specifically customized for women with the aim of narrowing the gender gap in IT.

As someone who has wide global experience in e-learning, having worked in varied markets such as Malaysia, Singapore, USA, and India, Rao had a lot of substance in his talk whereby the audience was presented with a clear idea of what e-learning and knowledge management are all about which was appropriate for the topic of the talk : The Future of Learning Systems.

E-learning is in demand because of the rapid obsolescence of knowledge and training (imagine without e-learning, how many more trees would have to be chopped down to manufacture books or other related knowledge/informative paper-based materials), need for impromptu training delivery, search for cost effective techniques to meet learning needs of a globally distributed workforce, and finally, demand for flexible access to life long learning. What makes e-learning possible are internet access becoming a standard at work and home, advances in digital technologies which enables creation of media rich content, and finally, increasing bandwidth and a better delivery platform that makes e-learning attractive.

What conventional learning system can achieve, so can e-learning, as asserted by Rao. For example, in the conventional learning system, students and lecturers have to attend the class by going on-campus and getting into a classroom; on the other hand, with e-learning, this is taken over by ILT, CBT, and virtual classroom. Therefore, it can be said that e-learning is a learning experience that can be acquired at anytime, anywhere, and at any pace. Nonetheless, it can also be no time, nowhere, and no pace at all; as with conventional system, every individual bears responsibility to his/her knowledge acquirement. The good news about e-learning is that it can save a lot more money than the conventional system, where in the older learning system, one would have to incur accommodation cost and transportation among others; on its role as education providers, the learning institutes would have to incur costs for the facilities, infrastructure, and services.

Rao then went on to talk on the difference between the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd generation of e-learning systems which for those who are not really into the computer related field, it is a new discovery for them. E-learning is not just in the academic field, but it is also a business solution for those businesspeople where e-learning is called Enterprise Knowledge Solutions (EKS). In this era of business expansion and globalization, it is useful to business organizations with large numbers and worldwide locations of employees to use EKS as a solution that enhances business performance by providing the right

information, skills, and updates across the extended enterprise. Rao also showed the audience how effective EKS is in training an organization's staff in new procedures or products by illustrating the time frame gap between the conventional way of training and the new one. Compared to the traditional method, which utilizes e-learning, the period between product launch, sales training, certification, and content update is shortened. Furthermore, the percentage of trainees updated with the latest development/information has also increased.

The four *Bicaras* hosted by AEI in the ASEM Room have been interesting for the information and knowledge acquired could never be found in any textbook. The words of wisdom, advice, and comments owed uninhibited and would prove to be useful pointers to improve our business environment. To all our *Bicara* speakers, thank you from our hearts, and to our *Bicara* audience, thank you for spending an hour of your precious lunch hour with us. ■

A Lecture by Dr Reino Hjerppe

Social Capital and Economic Growth

By MANIQUE COORAY, AEI Senior Research Assistant



The expansion of research in social capital has been explosive during the past ten years. From the view-point of an economist the reason for this growth is related to the revival of the new growth theory and the new institutional economies. This issue was addressed by Dr. Reino Hjerppe when he delivered a lecture on “Social Capital and Economic Growth” to the International Master Degree students of Asia-Europe Institute, in January 2004 at the Institute.

Since 1990, Dr. Hjerpee has been the Director General of the Government Institute for Economic Research (an Institute which is under the Ministry of Finance, Finland). He has been the Principal Academic Officer of the World Institute for Development Economics Research (WIDER) of the United Nations University/ Wider in Helsinki from 1994–1996, where he co-ordinated the Academic Programme and various other projects for the University. During his mission to Brussels as Financial Counsellor in the Finnish Embassy he was responsible for the implementation of economic and market policies. Dr. Hjerpee received his Doctorate in Political Science and Economics from the University of Helsinki in 1975 and a M.A. from the University of Rochester, USA.

In his lecture Dr Reino outlined the co-relation between economic success and social capital and the fundamental or ultimate source of economic growth.

Addressing these questions he stated that the empirical co-relation between economic success and social capital indicators is striking, and it is so overwhelming and that it cannot be considered all “spurious.” Referring to Durlauf, criticisms on the established importance of social capital, Dr Reino was of the view that we may still be “far away from the real causal analysis.” Hence one should be aware of the pitfalls in order to avoid giving completely wrong answers to extremely important questions.

Empirical studies shows that various dimensions of social capital are strongly co-related with economic growth. Since evidence seems to be quite ample it does not seem wrong to assume that these phenomena are related. The results so far are not however of such a kind that we could conclude that social capital causes economic success. In many ways the causality may be the opposite: “good economic performance enhance social capital. But it may not be so harmful if we do not know the ultimate causality. If we succeed to improve some dimensions of social capital like increasing trust or reducing corruption we may feel rather comfortable that we have not harmed economic progress.”

First empirical results of tests of influence and the role of social capital have certainly raised important issues. However much is still left to be desired owing to the unavailability of data.

Furthermore much remains to be done in clarifying the concept of social capital itself. But according to Dr Reino one should not perhaps be too worried about the unspecified nature of the concept. As we still do not know how to measure ability or intelligence or human capital even though these concepts have been around for some time and they have been fruitfully applied both in theory and practical applications.

At the question and answer session Dr Reino further explained and illustrated the formulation of social capital, and addressed the question on to what extent it is tied to national features or the specific cultural heritage of a country.

In conclusion Dr Reino stated that the concept of social capital is useful insofar as it draws our attention to those particular institutions serving economic life that might otherwise go un-noted and that we need to try to understand ways of improving around these concepts and that having an estimate of social capital is not an impediment to such an exercise. ■

A Lecture by Ms Sheau Ching
**Bringing Job Prospects to Women—
Through Community ICT Activities**

By MANIQUE COORAY, AEI Senior Research Assistant

The International Master Degree students of the Asia- Europe Institute attended a presentation entitled “Bringing Job Prospects to Women—Through Community Activities” by Ms Sheau Ching: founder of “E-Homemakers” – a network of multi-racial mothers of all ages, involved in activities for women emphasising self- reliance and educating women to excel in areas where they are skilled through the use of Information Technology.

Ms Ching holds a Bachelor’s degree in Food Science and Nutrition from Canada and a Master’s degree in International Administration from the United States. She spent ten years working in international organizations on community empowerment through health and informal education, poverty alleviation and sustainable development programs.

E-Homemakers was established as a local portal that promotes the concept of working from home by providing resources and a platform for homemakers and homeworkers to keep in line with Ministry of



Women and Family Development’s policy to promote working at home as a way to help working women with child-care problems. Though women have made great strides in a dynamic and increasingly globalised world, significant challenges still remain.

Ms Sheau highlighted these challenges in a lively and interesting discussion with the students. Drawing examples from “Working from Home” one of the projects, she explained the usage of Information Communication Technology and its challenges to individuals, especially to single mothers. She highlighted the importance of empowering women with greater economic freedom by maintaining personal motivation, managing finances and maintaining the equilibrium between work and family life.

As the presentation related to a module taken by the students on Social and Economic Dimensions of IT and the Digital Economy they found the lecture to be useful in their understanding of the concept of working from home using information technology. ■

Visiting Professors

By MANIQUE COORAY, AEI Senior Research Assistant



Dr. Susantha Goonatilake
Visiting Professor from Sri Lanka
23 – 28 February 2004

**Q: Have you been to Malaysia prior to this visit?
What is your impression of the country?**

Prof: I have been here several times before. And every time I am struck by both the rapid progress that Malaysia is making and also by the similarities between Malaysians and Sri Lankans especially

Malays and Sinhalese. Both are easy going friendly groups. Malaysia has many lessons for Asia especially Sri Lanka.

Q: What are your impressions of AEI?

Prof: It is a novel and needed initiative especially when Asia is emerging as an equal player with the West. Malaysia, because of its central position between China and India, because it has a cultural mix and because as a nation which has attracted Western investments while at the same time taking independent stands is ideally located for such an institute. But such a new Institute is only a beginning. There is much we have to do, for Asian centres to think independently and confidently with a fuller awareness of all the issues involved.

Q: What were your expectation of teaching the International Master students?

Prof: Frankly I did not have any especial expectations. I largely came with a blank mind. I was surprised however by the obvious unevenness among the students reflecting not only the economic differences between countries but also unevenness in exposure to multi cultural aspects of knowledge.

Q: What are the similarities and differences that you have found compared with the students you have taught prior to this?

Prof: I have lectured in many places in Asia, Europe and the US and the mix here evokes some of the different experiences in those places. There is a difference though, in that the Institute specifically aims to provide a conscious bridge between East and West at a time Asia is again rising. This should and would be reflected in the course content one aims at as well as the knowledge and attitudes of the students that are turned out.

Q: How would your course contribute to the International Master degree programmes?

Prof: I hope to provide both intellectual material as well as attitudes that could be key navigating tools for a future that will be a mix of Asia and Europe.

Q: As a Sri Lankan what do you consider to be the main benefits of a multicultural learning environment such as AEI and what role can it play in the ASEM process?

Prof: Sri Lanka, because of her location, has for over 2000 years, like southern Malaya being in the cross roads of global trade and civilizational traffic. So we are by history exposed to other cultures. In the first millennium we were called by Europeans the 'mediatrix' the centre of then global trade. We can be that again.

Q: Considering the multicultural setting of AEI, do you consider cultural diversity as an inhibitor or catalyst in fostering educational and intellectual exchanges?

Prof: Cultural diversity in the coming century will be one of the strengths and strategic resources of a country. Cultural diversity is a generator of innovation. I believe the US is so strong because it

is such a cultural mix. Uniformity is deadening and boring.

Q: In summing up could you tell me your views on your teaching experience here at AEI?

Prof: I found the interaction with students stimulating. When I posed somewhat far out ideas to stretch their imagination and think out of the box I found that several entered into the spirit of the thing.



Professor Dr. Guido Dedene
Visiting Professor from Belgium
23 – 28 March 2004

Q: Have you been to Malaysia prior to this visit? What are your impressions of the country?

Prof: This is my first visit to Malaysia. It is a pleasure for me to be here. My impression is that Malaysia is a well-organized country that sets its priorities right. Many types of economical activities are well developed, and the technology level is impressive. At the same time, Malaysia is a "green country", which seems to show a lot of respect for integration with nature. Finally, Malaysian society is multi-culturally organized, with a frictionless integration and co-existence of various cultures. It can serve in this respect as an example to many countries worldwide.

Q: What are your Impressions of the AEI ?

Prof: Of course I have followed the functioning of AEI since its creation, due to the good collaboration with Prof. Dr. A. Bryant. My impressions are that AEI is a fine, well-established institute. It has all the necessary infrastructure in place, including extensive Computer and Library Facilities. The physical organization of the Institute is pleasing, with its open spaces and relaxed atmosphere. The organization of the different offices in accordance with the Asian countries is interesting.

I feel also that this Institute is a living community, where students as well as Professors can feel at home. It creates the right context for the exchange of knowledge and experience, within a blending of Asian and European cultures.

Q: What were your expectations of teaching the International Master Degree students. What are the similarities and differences that you have found compared with the students you have taught prior to this?

Prof: I have been doing quite a bit of teaching abroad at the Master's level. I expect students to have a good constructive spirit, interested in the class materials and beyond. What is striking for this particular group is of course the mixture of cultures that are represented, both from an Asian as well as a European perspective. It reminds me a bit of the kind of European Community Projects that I used to be active in 10 years ago, where a mixture of West-European students and Mid-European's was used to exchange and consolidate teaching experiences on Information Management. Of course there is some similarity with International MBA programs, such as in the Leuven Gent Vlerick Management School, where I teach an Information Management class, part-time. Here the (Geographical) reach as well as the (content) range and focus are much more ambitious and innovative.

Q: How would your course contribute to the International Master degree programmes?

Prof: In several ways, I think. First of all in the way it is taught. The teaching is partially done by an Asian Professor (Cez Aspuria, Saint-Louis University, Baguio The Phillipines) and partially by me. Apart from the fact that it is good that students are confronted with a female professor in this ICT-related subject, they experience the richness of this complementary teaching capability. In fact, some of the course-material finds its roots in a development project between Belgium and the Phillipines, creating new curricula on ICT and Management. It is in this context that the contact with my colleague Cez was established.

Next it is a course which illustrates to the students how the various models that they have been exposed to in economics course apply or not apply to the field of Economics of Information Systems, Information Services and the Infrastructures for Knowledge Economies. Practical production plans and cost schemas are developed in this course, with a deep discussion of economies of scale, integration aspects, best practices, and case study examples. Moreover, the course material contain an extensive reading part, confronting the students with major journal articles as well as the state-of-the-art practice for the topics

that are presented.

I am convinced that every International Master in Information Management should have a deep understanding of the quantitative management aspects of ICT-based Knowledge Economies, and this is precisely the focus of this course.

Q: What do you consider to be the main benefits of a multicultural learning environment such as AEI and what role can it play in the ASEM process ?

Prof: A multicultural learning environment confronts the students as well as the staff directly with the similarities as well as the differences in the various cultures that are present in the Masters Class. Differences can be inspiring also, such as the degree of activity in class, but also the differences in roll-out of technologies and its impact on the management of these technologies. Examples that are valid in Europe are not necessarily relevant to Asian, and the other way around, of course. This is a challenge for both the students and the teachers.

The outcome of this environment is a better understanding, and on the longer run a better alignment of management theory and practices in Asia and Europe. The experience that both regions can learn a lot from each other is stimulating cooperation and integration.

Q: Considering the multicultural setting of AEI, do you consider cultural diversity as an inhibitor or catalyst in fostering educational and intellectual exchanges ?

Prof: The multi-cultural setting is definitely a catalyst for exchanges. This can be stimulated by using concrete case study examples of cooperation between Asia and Europe on ICT-management topics. One concrete example in the course is the use of off-shore reengineering techniques for Information Systems to resolve some of the maintenance pressure that has become the bottleneck for Information Systems Development in many European Organisations. Other examples include the analysis of differences in Corporate ICT Governance practices, as well as differences in Government practices.

The AEI Institute is a good example of learning by sharing, not only sharing what is in common, but also what makes every culture its own entity within a region, such as Asia or Europe. Confrontation of ideas and attitudes is definitely a life-experience for the students. I am also sure that students from this

institute will never forget it, and stay in contact with the growing network of AEI Alumni. It may be the ground for new initiatives, in terms of cooperation projects as well as new types of business activities.

Q: In summing up could you tell me your views on your teaching experience here at AEI ?

Prof: So far I enjoy everything I experience here: AEI is a generous, well-organized institute. It is an example of good hospitality to other institutes in the world where I have been. The students are a nice united group that definitely has a good group spirit. This makes it a good challenge and experience to work with them. After all, every time I teach a course to a different group, the course itself benefits also from this experience. In this way, AEI also contributes to me...



Professor Alfredo C Robles
Visiting Professor from the Philippines
1 – 12 March 2004

Professor Robles, Professor of Political Science at the College of Liberal Arts, De La Salle University- Manila, Philippines, visited Asia-Europe Institute on an Invitation extended by the Institute to deliver a series of lectures on Political Economy of Asia- Europe Relations to the AEI International Master Degree Students

He obtained his 1st Ph.D (Doctorat de 3e cycle), International and European Studies (Law of International Organizations and of International Economic Relations), from Université de Paris I (Panthén-Sorbonne) (1982–85).

And a Ph.D. in Political Science, Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs, Syracuse University, Syracuse, New York (1986-92)

Among his many publications (books, articles and collective publications) he is the author of - The Political Economy of Interregional Relations: ASEAN and the EU (to be published by Ashgate Publishing in 2004). ■

International Masters in Malaysia

The University of Malaya,
in conjunction with
Leeds Metropolitan University (UK),
and Universidad Autonoma
de Madrid (Spain)
has developed two International
Masters Programmes

- 1. Information Management (IMIM)**
- 2. Regional Integration (IMRI)**

The programmes will be delivered at the
Asia Europe Institute,
University of Malaya in Kuala Lumpur

There are a number of financial support available. These cover partially or totally, flights, tuition, accommodation and living expenses

Details of the programmes, application procedures, etc can be found at
[http://www.asia-europe-institute.org/
International-Master-Program/](http://www.asia-europe-institute.org/International-Master-Program/)

Published quarterly by Asia-Europe Institute,
University of Malaya, 50603 Kuala Lumpur
Tel: (603)7967 4645
Fax: (603)7954 0799
E-mail: asia_euro@um.edu.my
Homepage: <http://www.asia-europe-institute.org>
Executive Director:
Professor Dato' Dr. Shaharil Talib
Deputy Executive Director: Associate Professor
Dr. Shamsulbahriah Ku Ahmad
Senior Assistant Registrar: Ms. Rajini Kandiah
Secretary: Ms. Noeline Jayavasanthini



Asia-Europe Institute, University of Malaya

Lembah Pantai, 50603 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Tel: 03-7967 4645 Fax: 03-7954 0799

E-mail: asia_euro@um.edu.my

<http://www.asia-europe-institute.org>

Designed & produced in-house by Charles PE Yeoh (1APR04-50)

