

# Days of reckoning

Delegates from Asian, Pacific and Arab states underline jobs for youth in times of crisis at ILO event in Kyoto

ARUN DEVNATH from Kyoto, Japan

**D**EBATE over the Asian economy, celebrations of its unprecedented achievements in little more than a decade and fears of an uncertain future have defined the mood of a high-profile gathering in the Japanese city of Kyoto for four days.

Asia successfully rebounded from the 1997 financial crisis and, skillfully, navigated through the recent economic turmoil. Both episodes sparked fears that the economy would stall across the region. Each time, Asian countries proved their resilience. Resilience was in great supply and still is.

But it is no recipe for celebration -- not anymore.

The Asian economy is more open than ever before. With the risks of the global economy slipping into a double-dip recession, this openness has positive and negative implications. It is a crisis of confidence in the global financial markets, as Juan Somavia, director general of the International Labour Organisation, puts it.

The ILO invited about 500 delegates from governments, workers and employers from Asian, Pacific and Arab states. Many shared their views -- in their individual ways -- on what could be the best for Asian countries. They all agreed to put employment and decent work at the heart of their efforts to make growth and development balanced and sustainable.

They returned home, with one promise in mind -- to promote equitable, jobs-rich growth.

Other issues such as social protection, green jobs, youth employment and labour migration have received enough attention from the Asia-Pacific thinkers.

The region -- while it is recognised for its dynamic economy -- carries a long legacy of deprivation, inequality and brutal living standards. "This region has been the world's most dynamic region, economically, but we have not been getting enough jobs, decent work, from this growth," said Sachiko Yamamoto, ILO regional director for Asia and the Pacific.

"Most developing economies in the region have working age populations that are growing fast, but often we only see 1-2 percent employment growth for 6-7 percent of output growth. So if output growth drops below 6 percent, the region will not be producing enough jobs to



Young leaders take part in a recent panel discussion of the 15th Asia and Pacific Regional Meeting of the International Labour Organisation at Kyoto International Conference Centre in Japan.

meet the needs of those looking for work, particularly young people."

"Even before the current turmoil, this growth was unevenly shared and inequalities were increasing. This inequality threatens economic and social progress if it is not addressed," she added.

Many reflected on the Asian miracle as something for the world to emulate.

"Nor has Asia merely grown fast. For the past years, it has managed to combine growth with inclusiveness," said Neil Pierre, chief of the Policy Coordination Branch of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, in a written statement.

"The Asian experience with inclusive growth has been an invaluable example and contribution to the world."

There are many success stories. Take poverty for one. The number of people in the Asia-Pacific region living on less than \$1.25 a day plunged from 1.5 billion in 1990 to 954 million now. It is all the more impressive, given that its population increased by some 800 million over the same period.

At the ILO's 15th Asia and Pacific Regional

Meeting, known as APRM for short in its inner circle, analysts found links between mass uprisings in some Arab states and social exclusion, lack of decent jobs and denial of fundamental rights.

They recognised the importance of the decent work agenda in addressing widespread demands for social justice, dignity, decent jobs, respect for fundamental rights and an end to economic exclusion. They agreed to intensify efforts to ratify and implement core labour standards.

"This is a dynamic region facing huge challenges. To ensure that decent work and full employment are at the heart of sustainable development will be a key," said Nada Al-Nashif, ILO regional director for the Arab states.

"Our region needs growth that can deliver more and better jobs and to ensure that the most vulnerable are protected as they work their way out of poverty and informality," she said.

"Social dialogue and effective cooperation, bringing together workers, employers and governments, must be our watchwords for fulfilling these goals and meeting the aspirations of the youth of today and our future generations."



Panelist Noura Saleh Alturki, organisation development manager of Nesma Holding Company in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.

The APRM was attended by Yoshihiko Noda, prime minister of Japan, as a keynote speaker. Other keynote speakers included Jose Luis Guterres, vice prime minister of Timor Leste; Ahmed Luqman, director general of the Arab Labour Organisation; and Surin Pitsuwan, secretary general of Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

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## An event to promote the positives



Allein G Moore, a founder of Creative Circle Singapore, presents his topic on 'The Shy Salesman' at the beginning of a session at Communication Summit 2011 at Westin Dhaka on Tuesday.

SUMAN SAHA

**T**HE World Marketing Summit (WMS) would present a new platform to portray Bangladesh as there is a gap between reality and perception about the country in the global arena, said experts.

To be held on March 1-3 at Bangabandhu International Conference Centre in Dhaka, it will discuss how marketing philosophies, ethos and insights can be used to find innovative solutions to some global challenges.

The summit, a global initiative of the world's most influential marketer Professor Philip Kotler, will be held in association with the foreign affairs ministry of Bangladesh with an aim to create a better world through marketing.

"We often face humiliation abroad as the true picture has not been portrayed properly before the world," said Syed Ferhat Anwar, director strategy of WMS.

The first-ever world summit will help the country portray its positive side before the world, said Anwar at a daylong communication summit on Tuesday.

Bangladesh Brand Forum (BBF) in association with Cannes Lions on Tuesday organised the Communication Summit 2011 at Westin Dhaka. The Daily Star is the communications partner for the event.

Anwar, who is also the chief advisor of BBF, said the world has different problems including poverty, food security, education, health and environment, and marketing can be an effective tool

to address these problems.

"All these problems are related to the Millennium Development Goals and the first summit will focus on the four problem areas and develop a general concept on the 'future of marketing,'" he said.

The marketing summit will once again place Bangladesh on the global map after the World Cup Cricket, said K Mahmood Sattar, managing director of The City Bank at the event.

"It will help the country show its success stories before the world as any sort of international event brings the host country in the limelight in the global arena," said Sattar.

He said a class of entrepreneurs has grown in the country in the last 40 years, who are now

competing globally by offering quality and standard products.

He stressed the need for developing the 'Made in Bangladesh' brand.

He urged the government and private sector to exploit the summit to project Bangladesh's strengths and potential.

Most foreigners have little knowledge about Bangladesh, aside from being a flood-prone and poverty stricken region, said Charu Aggarwal Harish, regional planning director of Grey Asia Pacific.

But the country has a lot of positives to be shared in the global arena, she added.

Manfred Abraham, head of Brand Strategy of Interbrand Global, UK, said the summit will benefit the whole country.

But for this, it needs to clearly define the messages it wants to communicate to the global community, said Abraham.

To promote 'Made in Bangladesh', the country should focus on developing quality products and then communicate it to the world, like Japan did in the car industry, he added.

The BBF chief advisor said the marketing summit will follow a strategic map from 2012 to 2015 with a stepwise process.

"It is expected that by 2015, the MDGs will see worthwhile results from this unique marketing effort," said Anwar, who is also a marketing professor at IBA, Dhaka University.

The conceptual plan will be finalised in 2012, based on research findings in seven different global locations, while in the 2013 summit, the pilot results of the initiated plan will be submitted, he said.

Final adjustments will be made to take the projects forward in

Dipu Moni said in a press conference that the summit was expected to emerge as a global platform for the marketing world to exchange views on developing just and responsible marketing practices.

During the summit, experts will examine a number of issues such as human resources development, health, food security, environment and climate change.

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