Pledging Ceremony
3 December, Singapore

Three EU countries first pledge their second round of contributions to ASEF.

On 3 December 2001, a pledging ceremony was held on the premises of ASEF to mark the second round of contributions from France, Ireland, and Germany. Amb. Michel Filhol of France, Amb. Brendan Lyons of Ireland, and Amb. Volker Schlegel of Germany in Singapore presented the cheques on behalf of their respective governments to start replenishing the ASEF Fund. The previous round of fund since ASEF’s establishment in February 1997 is expected to run out by mid-2002.

Operating on voluntary contributions from member countries, ASEF aims to promote better mutual understanding between the peoples of Asia and Europe through greater intellectual, cultural, and people-to-people exchanges. To date, ASEF has completed over 110 projects such as the Asia-Europe Lecture, Asia-Europe Young Artists’ Painting Competition and Exhibition, Informal Human Rights Seminar, Asia-Europe Youth Co-operation Network, and ASEF Editors’ Roundtable.

ASEF takes this first renewal of support as a clear endorsement to carry on its work to bring the peoples of the two continents closer together. France, Ireland, and Germany have been the forerunners in the second round of contribution process. As this newsletter goes to print, the Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs of Austria, Benita Ferrero-Waldner equally expressed Austria’s commitment to the second round.

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In recognition of the vast diversity of ethnic groups existing across Asia and Europe, ASEF organised with the Office of the National Education Commission of Thailand, a seminar that convened 90 representatives from 17 ASEM countries.

The main objectives of the seminar were to identify the current status of ethnic cultures in ASEM member countries, provide opportunities for networking among relevant specialists and institutions, and to enable exchanges of experiences or strategies for preserving the different ethnic cultures. Two workshop sessions were organised to discuss: 1) Concurrent Situation on Promotion of Ethnic Cultures, 2) Ethnic Cultures in Local Economy, 3) Protection and Development of Ethnic Cultures, and 4) Promotion of International Exchange on Cultures of Ethnic Groups.

The seminar reasserted and supported the aims of ASEF in seeking for ways to use culture to create meaningful bridges between Asia and Europe. It explored different methods and ways of creating such exchanges, particularly with the ethnic minority cultures of each country in mind.

Approximately 60 participants from 19 ASEM members convened to address the topic of governance in the context of globalisation.

Plenary sessions covered issues such as globalisation and multilevel governance, remaking of global institutions, new regionalism, and deficits of democracy. The Roundtable was co-organised by ASEF, Warwick University, Singapore Institute of International Affairs, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, with the support of the British Council, and hosted by Corpus Christi College, Oxford University, and its President Sir Tim Lankester. A selected number of papers are due to appear shortly in a special issue of The Pacific Review, published by Routledge, UK.

Contact Arnaud d'Andurain (andurain@asef.org), Director of Intellectual Exchange, for further information.

The 2nd AEYEF, organised back-to-back with the 6th Asia-Europe Business Forum (AEBF) this year, brought together young entrepreneurs from Asia and Europe for a two-day forum, which enabled them to have an open dialogue and exchange of views.

The participants learnt more about different business cultures, and they discussed how to improve the environment for business and to achieve a closer co-operation in the future. On 8 October, three outstanding participants were recognised for the positive examples they set by successfully co-operating with companies in the other region, and for proposing innovative strategies for future business co-operation between the two regions. They were presented with AEYEF Awards during an Award Ceremony at Istana, the Office of the President of Singapore. The recipients this year were Robert Baker (CEO of Xiam Ltd., Ireland), Cheolsoo Ahn (President and CEO of Ahnlab Inc., Korea), and Kurt Kammerer (co-founder and CEO of living systems AG, Germany).
This year's AEYLS was organised in partnership with the Malaysian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Asia-Europe Institute (AEI).

Hon. Datuk Hishammuddin Tun Hussein, Minister of Youth and Sports, Malaysia, delivered the official opening speech and Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Malaysia, the closing remarks to the 103 participating young leaders. Four working groups focused largely on enhancing cultural co-operation, education exchange, co-existence in multiethnic societies, as well as co-operation among small and medium size enterprises (SME) in Asia and Europe.

The 10th Board of Governors Meeting, hosted by the Brunei Ministry of Foreign Affairs, took place in Bandar Seri Begawan.

Apart from appraising the past projects and considering new project proposals, other events were organised around the BOG that drew large public attention. An ASEF Public Lecture by Hubert Neiss, Chairman of Deutsche Bank, Asia, who delivered a timely presentation on "US Economic Slowdown: Consequences for Asia and Europe," was attended by over 200 invitees from both the local and foreign private and public sectors. The recently produced ASEF music CD was officially launched by the Executive Director during the Alumni Dinner on 19 October. His Royal Highness Prince Mohamed Bolkiah, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Brunei Darussalam hosted a luncheon on 20 October, and Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and ASEF Governor for Brunei, Dato Hj Suyoi Hj Osman hosted the dinner. The next Board of Governors Meeting will be held in Salamanca, Spain during May 2002.

Co-organised with EuriCAL (European Institute for Arts and Culture Law), the seminar gathered 60 participants from 19 ASEM countries to discuss the issues of law, economics and new technologies related to the music field.

The participants were musicians, producers, composers, and representatives of music companies and governmental bodies from Europe and Asia. The Seminar was supported by Institute for Political Science, Lyon; Europa-Lisboa Consultores; Assemblée des Chambres Françaises de Commerce et d'Industrie; European Music Office, Brussels; Ministry of Foreign Affairs, France; Rhônes-Alpes Region; SACEM; and City of Lyon.

Co-organised with Konrad Adenauer Foundation and supported by Indonesian House of Representatives, the 3rd YPM stressed on the greater need for effective governance in a globalising world, drawn upon the experiences of young parliamentarians from Asia and Europe.

The conference examined the changing political and social scenes in both regions, and touched upon the role of Government in ensuring good corporate governance, while creating a setting for substantive and candid dialogue, as the 50 invited parliamentarians participated in their personal capacity without necessarily reflecting the opinions of their respective political groups.

Contact Zainal Mantaha (mantaha@asef.org), Director of People-to-People Exchange, for further information.
**UPDATE**

Asia-Europe Cultural Highlights, during 3rd China Shanghai International Arts Festival

1 November - 1 December
Shanghai, China

Mrs de Ménonville during the forum with arts students from Shanghai

Asia-Europe Seminar on Cultural Heritage, Man and Tourism

5 – 7 November
Hanoi, Vietnam

Asia-Europe Seminar on Cultural Heritage Training

26 – 28 November
Alcalá de Henares, Spain

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**Co-organised with the Centre for Shanghai International Arts Festival and Shanghai New Focus Art and Culture Co., Ltd., the event saw young artistic talents from 20 ASEM countries across Asia and Europe gather to interact freely.**

Asia-Europe Cultural Highlights comprised Asian programmes, European programmes and Asia-Europe joint-programmes, aimed at showcasing visual and performing arts from Asia and Europe. Artists, producers, event organisers and scholars benefited from this event by having real international exposure through the various arts performances and exhibitions. In addition, they had the opportunity to exchange insights and ideas while developing their initiatives through the art workshops and forum. A forum on "How to enhance arts exchange between young artists from Europe and Asia" was organised as part of the Asia-Europe Young Artists' Painting Exhibition. The moderator was Corinne de Ménonville, a curator from France.

**To address the concern of tourism in ASEM countries, the seminar was co-organised by Ministry of Culture and Information, Vietnam; the French-speaking community of Belgium, Walloon Region; University of Liège, Belgium (Laboratory of Anthropology of Communication); and ASEF.**

The seminar introduced a sociological and anthropological approach to the current debates surrounding cultural heritage and tourism: how can the understanding of man as a cultural vector, with its natural inclinations towards tourism, contribute to a better management of the cultural heritage and the tourism industry? The 55 participants from 17 ASEM countries (anthropologists, social scientists, experts in cultural heritage, public administrators, and organisations such as UNESCO) discussed the particular question during six workshops with the following topics - 1) Solidarity Tourism: an idea and its reality; 2) Images of Tourism; 3) Urban Tourism and Urbanism; 4) Influence of Tourism on Local Lifestyle; 5) From Traditional Handicraft to Industrialised Souvenirs; 6) Cultural Heritage and its Representation.

**The seminar was adopted from the Action Plan of the First Asia-Europe Experts Meeting on Protection and Promotion of Cultural Heritage which was held in Hanoi, Vietnam, in January 1999.**

One of the priority actions is in the field of protection and promotion of cultural heritage that need to be addressed to increase cultural heritage awareness for the public, professionals and local officials, with emphasis on fostering training for actors and partners as well as promoting scientific co-operation and reinforcing legal system integration. In order to achieve this, ASEF co-organised Asia-Europe Seminar on Cultural Heritage Training with University of Alcalá and Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports of Spain. More than 40 participants from 21 ASEM countries actively participated in this seminar to discuss five main topics: 1) The Protection of the Cultural Heritage; 2) Inventory Methods of Preserving Cultural Heritage; 3) Cultural Heritage Architects and Operators; 4) Co-operation Between Historical Monument Research Laboratories; 5) Tourism Trades and The Cultural Heritage Conservation. A series of training plan for the next 3-5 years is currently in the process of being set up.
Ulrich Niemann has left Asia-Europe Foundation after his dedicated service during the last four years as the Director of People-to-People Exchange. Niemann is credited with the creation and development of ASEF's People-to-People Exchange portfolio, with its focus on youth, education, and the creation of synergies between young leaders from different sectors within the civil society. By the time of his departure, the PPE framework would contain several successful programmes under its banner as such as ASEF University programme, Asia-Europe Youth Co-operation, and ASEF Young Parliamentarians Meetings. He has been appointed to head of the German Friedrich Naumann Foundation's representative office for Northeast Asia in Seoul, Korea.

Zainal Arif Mantaha has immediately succeeded Ulrich Niemann to lead the People-to-People Exchange portfolio. He arrives from the Permanent Mission of Singapore to the United Nations in New York.

Albrecht Rothacher has been appointed the Director of Public Affairs at ASEF as of October following his previous post in the European Union Enlargement directorate at the European Commission in Brussels.

ASEF Governor for Luxembourg, Edmond Israel gave a speech as the guest speaker on “New Thinking and Global Ethics in the 21st Century” at a seminar organised by Dr. Shirley Lim, Managing Director of Research Communication International Pte. Ltd. on the topic: "Leading People in the New Economy".

He invited others to contemplate what the progress of knowledge and science has brought to mankind throughout modern history, especially at the wake of the September 11th terrorist attacks in New York City. Calling for ethical values and religious beliefs to accompany the material development, he articulated that “to eliminate the motives to kill is the most fundamental challenge confronting mankind today since its origin." Just as important, it also posed a great challenge “to restore the respect for the life of others as well as for one’s own life.” The seminar took place at the Four Seasons Hotel in Singapore on 16 October 2001. Governor Israel is also the honorary Chairman of Clearstream International, an international clearing institution based in Luxembourg.

Discrete silence has long been considered a virtue in Japan.

Perhaps due to this national penchant, the Japanese are somewhat unaccustomed to speaking their minds. However, in the contemporary world, it is essential for the Japanese people to express their “honme” (honest, undisguised opinion) without mincing words if we are to promote international exchange and cooperation across borders.

I happen to serve as Chairman of the English-Speaking Union of Japan, a non-profit, non-political and independent organization established 3 years ago, whose activities are supported by its members and funded solely by the private sector. The ESUJ has set up on its website the “Japan in Their Own Words (JITOW)” column to try to meet this essential need. The JITOW column intends to present a variety of views held by Japanese thinkers on a wide range of issues for non-Japanese readers both at home and abroad. As of the end of October 2001, the ESUJ has enlisted some 90 informed Japanese contributors who have consented to write for the JITOW from time to time on a gratuitous basis.

The ESUJ does not intend to advocate any specific viewpoint of its own; the opinions expressed in the JITOW column are those of the individual writers. If you are interested in knowing where Japanese interests lie and how the Japanese are arguing among themselves to arrive at national consensus on important issues, we hope that this column may be able to answer your interest to some extent. Readers of the articles posted in the JITOW column can also express their thoughts in the Bulletin Board (BBS) attached to this column. I would be very happy if as many members of the ASEF Newsletters as possible would take advantage of these facilities to promote better understanding among the peoples of the world.

Masamichi Hanabusa, ASEF Governor for Japan
East and West are within us

1 December 2001
By Asad Latif

Published In The Straits Times,
Singapore

Relations between Asia and Europe have improved because of institutions such as the Asia-Europe Foundation in Singapore and the Amul Bhattacharji Centre for European Studies in Calcutta.

I received an e-mail recently from a person who said that he was opening an East-West communication centre in Sweden.

Mr Martin Enz, who uses poetry and dance to develop creative minds, wrote: “We have to learn with our whole being. We have to discover East and West inside ourselves.”

Then he added: “I love multi-cultural Singapore very much, lah!”

I thank him for his attempts to bridge the gap between East and West, and his “lah”.

This country does mean something in the East-West continuum. It is not for nothing that the Asia-Europe Foundation (Asef) is based here.

The foundation, which promotes intellectual, cultural and people-to-people exchanges between the two continents, was launched by the first Asia-Europe Meeting in Bangkok in 1996, at the suggestion of Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong.

Mr Delfin Colomé, the Spaniard at Asef’s helm, is enthusiastic about Singapore because it is a multi-cultural country. “If Singapore did not exist, we would have to create it out of nothing to house Asef,” he told an interviewer.

Among Singapore’s resources is Mr Colome’s predecessor at Asef, Professor Tommy Koh, who now heads the Institute of Policy Studies here.

Decorating him with the French Legion of Honour award in August, French Ambassador Michel Filhol said that Prof Koh’s qualities of thought and speech – precision, brevity, incisiveness, assertiveness and smoothness – constituted the “Kohnian Way” in diplomacy.

Prof Koh deserves to have a diplomatic style named after him because he has deepened and strengthened Singapore’s relations with Europe, after doing the same with the United States.

Watching him being decorated at the French envoy’s residence here, I felt truly happy for Singapore’s role in Asian-European relations.

Globalisation can pull Asia and Europe apart, but it can also bring them together. What transpires depends on Asians and Europeans.
At the end of the day, however, the effort to build bridges is not only an official one, but is also personal. As the person from Sweden says, East and West lie inside each of us. SO IT is for me.

I was a member of the Asiatic Society when I lived in Calcutta years ago.

The society was set up in 1784 by a British colonial official, Sir William Jones, as a centre for the study of almost everything concerning man and nature within the geographical limits of Asia.

Its publications, which reflected myriad ways of studying and relating to Asia, were amazing in their intellectual versatility.

Another organisation to which I belonged was the Amal Bhattacharji Centre for European Studies.

It was named after a legendary teacher of English Honours at Presidency College, Calcutta, who had died a few years before I arrived as a student at the department.

Just as Sir William of the Asiatic Society believed in adopting an inclusive approach to the study of Asia, Professor Bhattacharji believed that it was impossible to study English literature fruitfully except as a part of the broader European intellectual tradition.

His thinking was in tune with that of literary critic Erich Auerbach, who suggests in his book, Mimesis: The Representation Of Reality In Western Literature, that a critical reading of texts from the Greek poet Homer to the English novelist Virginia Woolf reveals subtle but key shifts in the social construction of reality.

Understanding those shifts helps a person, anywhere in the world, to understand better the historical transitions that his own society has made.

In that spirit, a number of distinguished scholars, both Indian and foreign, spoke to the centre's members on themes such as divine and human love in mediaeval European literature, the learned lyric and popular ballads in mediaeval Europe, the Norse myth of the origins of social classes, and modern English poetry.

Also, while Professor Bhattacharji appreciated that Europeans, with their minds trained on Homer, the Latin poet Virgil, the Italian poet Dante and Shakespeare, had helped Indians to know themselves better, he thought that they, too, with their knowledge of the Vedas, the Mahabharata and the Ramayana, could help the West to rediscover itself.

My problem was that I could not bear to read Virgil’s Fourth Eclogue or listen to Raaga Malkosh while a hungry child cried.

Likewise, the mothers, sisters and daughters of the slums, forced to bathe in public while the human vultures of the city feasted on the sight, found no representation in the realities celebrated by the classics, East or West.

Nevertheless, Calcutta in the 1970s was a particularly fascinating place in which to think of Europe because, in a strange kind of way, it resembled a mediaeval European city. Its pulse was captured in the intellectual historian Johan Huizinga’s book, The Waning Of The Middle Ages.

“To the world when it was half a thousand years younger, the outlines of all things seemed more clearly marked than to us.

“The contrast between suffering and joy, between adversity and happiness, appeared more striking. All experience had yet to the minds of men the directness and absoluteness of the pleasure and pain of child-life,” Huizinga writes.

“All things presenting themselves to the mind in violent contrasts and impressive forms lent a tone of excitement and of passion to everyday life, and tended to produce that perpetual oscillation between despair and distracted joy, between cruelty and pious tenderness which characterise life in the Middle Ages,” he adds.

Cruelty and tenderness did define Calcutta. SINGAPORE is different.

In terms of its quality of life, it is part of the modern and not the mediaeval West. Indeed, parts of Europe today are not as modern as Singapore.

But one lesson that we here can learn from European history, be it classical, mediaeval, Renaissance or modern, is the capacity for angst.

By that, I mean the capacity not to be easily happy, the urge to ask questions whose answers will never arrive, and a stubborn persistence with thoughts that lead nowhere in particular while leading everywhere in general.

Parents should encourage their children to read widely in order to imagine wildly what Singapore means in the global drama unfolding amidst the flux of time.

Our Asian roots equip us well to do so. Inheritors of ancient civilisations, we should be able to understand what cultural resilience means. Resilience is the ability to absorb external influences without being absorbed by them.

Prof Koh is a good example of the kind of culturally-resilient person whom I have in mind.

He remains deeply and defiantly Asian in spite of a lifetime of intellectual and professional immersion in the ideas and the affairs of the West.

Singapore’s dual character – its Eastern culture and its Western companionship – makes it an excellent bridge between the two parts of the world.

Its material success, remarkable by both Eastern and Western standards, gives it the wherewithal to play that role.

East and West are truly within us, which is why we can embrace both.
Seminar on the Role of Higher Education Institutions in Promoting Entrepreneurship
6 November, Singapore

ASEF, INSEAD Asia Campus, and the University of Limerick, Ireland, held a seminar at ASEF to mark the visit by Prof. Roger G.H. Downie, Vice-Chancellor and President of the University of Limerick. Professionals and academics from educational institutions, think tanks, statutory boards, ministries, diplomatic missions, and business associations with interests in higher education and the promotion of entrepreneurship were invited to attend.

Public Lecture on the European Union’s Enlargement towards Eastern Europe and its Implications for Asia
9 November, Singapore

The new Director of Public Affairs, Dr. Albrecht Rothacher, has recently arrived from his last post at the European Commission involving the European Union’s enlargement negotiations with Eastern European states. Before a mixed audience of diplomats, academics, and journalists, he offered some insights to one of the most prioritised agenda within the EU today.

Informal Discussion on “East Asia in the Rapidly Changing World”
16 November, Singapore

A visiting scholar, Prof. Wang Feiling, and Mr. Jean-Marie Magnien from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of France (Deputy Senior Official of ASEM) led the informal discussion co-organised by ASEF and the East Asian Institute. The speakers addressed and answered questions on issues such as China's entry into the WTO and its consequences on the domestic economy and that of the rest of the world; security and economic concerns for Northeast Asia and the world vis-à-vis the success or failure of China's economic progress; the current international focus on terrorism and its effects on the region; and the engagement policies of Europe and the United States with East Asia.

ASEF Music CD Unity in Diversity

The 26 traditional music tracks compiled in the CD represent each of the ASEM (Asia-Europe Meeting) members. Prof. Keith Howard, a Senior Lecturer in Korean Studies and Music at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, co-ordinated the production. Contact the PA department for one complimentary CD, while stocks last.

Exchange and the Finnish Women’s Association for Joint Action
28 January – 8 February 2002
Venue tbc
Asia-Europe Workshop on TV Documentary
Co-organised with Asia-Pacific Institute for Broadcasting Development (AIBD) and Singapore Broadcasting Authority
15 February 2002
Singapore
5th Anniversary of Asia-Europe Foundation
28 February 2002
Brussels, Belgium
1st ASEF University Alumni Dinner