



# CACCI

## Health & Education Newsletter

Volume 2

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### Message from the Chairman

Dear CACCI members and friends,

*As Chairman of the Asian Council on Health and Education (ACHE), I am pleased to present the second issue of the Newsletter of ACHE to all our colleagues in the health and education sectors.*



*This issue not only highlights the trends in the Asia-Pacific region, but also includes the latest news of the region and interesting reports on health and education. I hope that you will find the articles included in this Newsletter of great value, and look forward to your contribution to the Newsletter in the future.*

*Since assuming the Chairmanship in 2012, I have found this Council a valuable platform for information exchange and networking for all representatives from the region's health and education sectors. Therefore, all CACCI members are encouraged to take advantage of the Council and the Newsletter as channels to voice their opinions and viewpoints.*

*My Best Wishes*

**Dr. Seyed Hassan Tabatabaieinejad**  
Chairman  
Asian Council on Health and Education (ACHE)

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## At the 27th CACCI Conference in Cebu

# *The Breakout Session on Health and Education is Well-Attended at the 27th CACCI Conference*



*Dr. Nejad from Iran chairs the breakout session on Health and Education.*



*Speakers from Malaysia and Philippines share the development of health and education systems in their countries.*

**D**r. Seyed Hassan Tabatabaei Nejad, Chairman of the Asian Council on Health and Education (ACHE) from Iran, chaired the breakout session of ACHE held on March 14 in Cebu City in conjunction with the 27th CACCI Conference. The Session attracted the participation of more than 30 delegates from the local community and overseas.

The session featured two speakers who made presentations on the status and prospects of health and education systems in their respective countries.

A. **Fr. Dionisio Miranda**,

President of the University of San Carlos in the Philippines, spoke on the status and prospects of health and education systems in the country.

B. **Dato' Ghazali Bin Dato' Mohd. Yusoff**, Executive Chairman, Nusantara Technologies Sdn Bhd, made a presentation on educational system in Malaysia.

After the two presentations, there was a panel discussion and sharing of experiences among the participants.

In his concluding remarks, Dr. Tabatabaei expressed his appreciation to all delegates for their presence, and

encouraged them to actively contribute in the expansion of the ACHE. He identified the following industries as the most interesting areas for cooperation and networking among the ACHE's members:

- A. Global health care and medical tourism
- B. Medical technology
- C. Pharma and biotechnology
- D. Higher education

Dr. Tabatabaei also proposed holding a conference and side exhibition as a platform for sharing of experiences and to encourage more interprofessional collaborations. ■

## **Bangkok's Chinese Medicine Center Courts Younger Generation**

*By Phoowadon Duangmee*

**T**raditional Chinese medicine may be recognized all over the world for its healing properties but it also has a major problem: to the layman, it actually makes very little sense.

Enter a traditional medicine shop in Bangkok's Chinatown and you're completely lost amidst piles of aromatic seeds, strange-looking roots

and some dead wood. You might be more confused, amused or perhaps even frightened when discovering that pungent dead scorpions, worms or centipedes are part of the recommended remedy.

Traditional Chinese medicine has been practiced for more than 2,000 years but does it really have a place in

the high-tech 21st century?

Responding to calls for alternative medicine and tapping a healthy market share in Chinatown is Beijing Tong Ren Tang, a traditional Chinese medicine store and health care center.

Nestled on bustling Yaowarat Road, Beijing Tong Ren Tang (Thailand) is a partnership between the Thai pharmaceutical company, Vejpongosot, and the original Tong Ren Tang — China's largest producer of traditional Chinese medicine. Founded

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## Bangkok's Chinese

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in 1669, Tong Ren Tang earned its reputation by supplying Chinese medicine to the royal court for almost 200 years. A few years ago, the two pharmaceutical companies combined to offer user-friendly and hassle-free traditional Chinese health care.

“Taking traditional Chinese medicine can be a lot of hassle and involves a good deal of time and patience,” said Yuttadech Vejongs, deputy managing director of Beijing Tong Ren Tang (Thailand), who’s a modern medicine pharmacist by training as well as an expert in herbal medicine.

“First you arrange a meeting with the Chinese medicine practitioner, who will trace your problem through your symptoms, before giving an herbal prescription. Then you have to make a trip to the herbal medicine shop before going home with a bag full of dried plants and some animal parts. And it’s not over yet: next you have to prepare the ingredients, which can often mean boiling 10 cups of water for every cup of medicinal water.”

Preparing traditional Chinese medicine, then, is out of the question for many city dwellers who lack the facilities to cook for themselves.

That’s where Beijing Tong Ren Tang steps in, saving time and money for the herbal medicine consumer.

“We offer hassle-free treatment,” said Yuttadech, holding up an herbal prescription written in Chinese. “You can fax or email us a prescription and leave the boiling and cooking process to us.”

Beijing Tong Ren Tang operates on the founding theories of Chinese medicine practice, many of which date back several hundred years.

The treatments, which are very much based on Chinese cosmological concepts like yin and yang as well as the five elements, include various forms of herbal medicine and acupuncture.



But what makes Beijing Tong Ren Tang distinctive from other herbal shops on Yaowarat Road is its strong sense of professionalism. To win the young generation’s trust in herbal medicine, the Chinese health center is run on a modern and systematic clinic model with different wings, wards and rooms for diagnosis and treatment. Six well-trained and educated herbal medicine practitioners, with experience in clinical treatment, work daily to diagnose and trace health problems by palpating the pulse and inspecting the tongue.

“Once the client gets an herbal prescription from the practitioner, they can purchase the medicinal herbs at Beijing Tong Ren Tang,” says Yuttadech. “They can of course buy them from other herbal medicine shops but I have to say that our herbs are second to none in Yaowarat.”

Dong Chong Cao, Tu Si Zi, Huang Qi, Bai Zhu and 100 other varieties of herbal plants are well kept in the temperature-controlled store room before finding their way to the medicine cupboard in the front store.

“Ninety percent of traditional Chinese medicine is made from plants, and we import them from Tong Ren Tang in China,” adds Yuttadech. “We ensure our customers get only premium herbs.”

The front store is the domain of several well-trained traditional pharmacists, some of whom hail from China. Working in front of the

large, multi-layered Chinese medicine cupboard, they take the herbal prescriptions, examine the recipes then pick the herbs for their next destination — the boiling pot. Just as in modern medical centers, the pharmacist double-checks the prescription.

“The pharmacists know their trade very well. If the practitioner prescribes an herbal medicine that doesn’t appear right, for example, giving an unusually high dose of some particular variety of herb, the pharmacists will consult the practitioner for more detail,” adds Yuttadech.

In many ways Beijing Tong Ren Tang is a traditional health care center with a modern face, offering those who prefer to eschew Western treatments for health and healing. It provides a one-stop service, from diagnosis to prescription to traditional pharmacy, for people who want to try the healing power of herbs.

“In the way of traditional Chinese medicine, we don’t really focus on curing the disease. With a weaker dose of herbal medication, it will take longer than the modern medicine to heal,” says Yuttadech, who earned his pharmacology degree at a Thai university.

“On the other side of the coin, traditional Chinese medicine works to keep people healthy — physically and spiritually — and keep the disease at the bay.”

Source: BANGKOK, *The Nation/Asia News Network*, April 1, 2013 ■

## Experts Urge Reform of Singapore's Healthcare Policy

While Singapore's healthcare system has served the country well till now, experts felt the time has come to restructure it in view of an increasingly ageing population. NUS academics, practitioners and government officials gave their perspectives on possible reforms at the Tembusu Forum on healthcare policy and values on 18 February.

Kick-starting the conversation, Professor Tommy Koh, Rector of Tembusu College at NUS, noted that the Singapore government has done relatively well as evidenced by the World Health Organization's ranking which placed the country as having the sixth best healthcare system in the world. This was achieved with a 4 per cent Gross Domestic Product (GDP) spending. For comparison, the US spends about 18 per cent of its GDP on healthcare.

The panellists gave an overview of the evolution of Singapore's health system, delving into its model, structure, care-giving and financing options over the years.

Associate Professor Phua Kai Hong, from the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy at NUS, opined that the current medical financing which covers about 15 per cent of Singapore's total healthcare expenses has to be reviewed. He underscored the need for a balanced structure of taxes, insurance and savings.

Agreeing, Dr Jeremy Lim, who is the Chair of the Steering Committee of the NUS Initiative to Improve Health in Asia, said: "In this national conversation, how can we ensure better financial protection of the individual, even if the state assumes a little bit more of this risk? If we can do that, I think many Singaporeans [would be able to] genuinely have that peace of mind".

For Dr Lam Pin Min, Chairman of the Government Parliamentary Committee for Health, the local

hybrid system has its strengths by offering universal medical coverage for all Singaporeans via the 3Ms - Medisave, Medishield and Medifund. However, Singapore must be mindful of the impending silver "tsunami", the increased need for homecare and care-giver support, changing disease patterns and the global shortage of medical manpower. To address this, Dr Lam proposed more financial assistance for the needy and urged the Ministry of Health to also consider the social, political and economic conditions.

Arguing for a larger government contribution, Associate Professor Paul Tambyah from the NUS Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine offered the solution of a single-payer premium system instead of the 3Ms.

The 200-strong audience



comprising mainly students learnt more from the panel discussion during the Question and Answer session. The topics raised included the single-payer premium system adopted by countries such as Taiwan, the importance of preventive services, as well as the different perceptions of healthcare by the government and the population.

A flagship event of Tembusu College, the Tembusu Forum provides a platform for Tembusu College residents and the larger community to discuss important global and regional issues.

*Source: National University of Singapore, 20 February 2013* ■

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## Home and Health Devices Controlled by Apps on the Rise

*By Natasha Baker*

Tired of checking the washing machine to see if a cycle has completed, or worrying that the lights were left on at home? Apps are increasingly helping people monitor and control objects remotely on their mobile devices.

From Internet-connected washing machines and smart refrigerators to bathroom scales, gadgets that connect to the Internet are on the rise in homes, and apps are the means to monitor and control them.

By 2022, the average household with two teenage children will own roughly 50 Internet-connected devices, up from approximately 10 today, according to estimates by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. This trend has been

dubbed the "Internet of Things."

"(Apps) are the people end of the Internet of things," said Stephen Prentice, vice president and fellow at research advisory firm Gartner.

"On one hand you've got all these devices giving out information, and on the other you have people accessing them increasingly through their tablets or mobile phones."

Home control is a popular use of the technology. A washer and dryer produced by Samsung, for instance, can be remotely controlled with an Android app to start and stop the machine, and control factors like temperature. Users can even get notifications when a load is finished.

Overhead lights called Philips

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## Home and Health

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Hue can be controlled with the accompanying iPhone or Android app to switch them on and off remotely, set timers, and change mood lighting.

Temperature in the home can be controlled remotely with Nest Mobile for iPhone, iPod Touch, iPad and Android, while air quality can be measured with Netatmo, a personal weather station and air quality monitor. With the iPhone or Android app, users can view information on indoor air quality, such as the level of carbon dioxide and humidity in the room, and the app suggests ideal times to ventilate.

There's even an app and gadget for plant owners. Koubachi, a plant sensor placed in the soil of a potted plant, connects to an iPhone app to send notifications when it needs watering, misting, sun or shade.

"The diversity of these devices is huge," said Prentice.

"The vast majority of the future devices of this type don't exist today — they're new things. If you can measure it, then someone is going to have a device to do that and someone will find a use for that data," he said.

Apps and gadgets are also playing a role in monitoring and tracking health.

For weight tracking, the Withings Health Mate app for iPhone and Android automatically tracks weight by connecting to one of Paris-based company Withings' smart bathroom scales. A similar app for babies, Withings Baby Companion app for iPhone, tracks a baby's weight and compares it to others the same age.

Those who want to improve their



## Turkey Seeks to Boost Healthcare with New Investment Rules

By Ozge Ozbilgin

**T**urkey has passed new regulations aimed at making private investment in its healthcare sector easier, a move which officials hope could unlock billions of dollars of investment over the next few years.

Turkey's private healthcare sector is growing rapidly, with more people taking out private health insurance and long waiting times at state hospitals, but the lack of a clear regulatory framework has been a barrier to foreign investment.

Private equity investors favour Turkey's fast growing services industries, including healthcare and education, drawn by a near tripling in nominal per capita GDP over the past decade and its young population of 75 million.

Under the new law on public-private partnerships (PPP), passed by parliament late on Thursday, the state will rent city hospitals built and run by the private sector for 25 years.

The new rules aim to cut red tape and pave the way for government guarantees for international project financing investments of 500 million lira (\$279 million) and above.

"The regulation will have a positive impact on the sector as it will remove delays caused by the previous rules and reduce the number of permissions needed," said Tunc Duygun, PPP coordinator for the YDA Insaat construction firm.

posture can turn to the LUMObac, a device worn around the waist that connects to an iPhone app that notifies users when they're slumping, and track their posture over time.

To track calories burned, distance traveled or steps taken, there are a flurry of options available, including wristbands like the Nike+ FuelBand and Larklife, which connect to iPhone apps, and the Jawbone UP and Fitbit One, which connect to iPhone and Android apps.

"Most importantly, the foreign investor will feel more secure," said Duygun, whose company won four tenders to build city hospitals with its Italian partner, privately-held Inso Sistemi Per Le Infrastrutture.

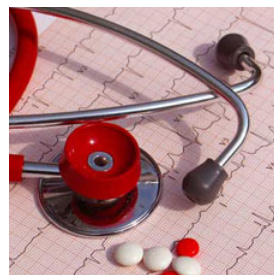
Three Turkish hospitals are currently under construction under a PPP framework, while six are in the contract stage, seven in final bids stage and two still awaiting pre-qualification applications. The projects are expected to add 28,000 beds to Turkey's existing 200,000-bed capacity.

The new rules aim to speed up the tender process.

"The world will have a different view of Turkish projects once these regulations are in place," said another executive from a private company working in the healthcare sector.

The three hospitals under construction include two in the capital Ankara - one being built by a joint venture of Turkey's IC Ictas and Dia Holding, the other by Italy's Astaldi and Turkerler - and one in the central city of Kayseri, being built by YDA Insaat and Inso Sistemi.

Source: Reuters, February 22, 2013 ■



However, with this new technology on the rise, Prentice is concerned that privacy laws may not yet account for the collection of personal data that these gadgets and apps may have access to, such as location.

"It's a bit of a wild west out there," said Prentice. "The regulatory environment just hasn't caught up with the technology," he said.

"At the moment it's a case of buyer beware."

Source: Reuters, April 25, 2013 ■

# Russia Introduces New Healthcare Rules for Foreigners

*By Olga Doronina*

Russia comes up with new healthcare regulations for foreigners. Emergency aid will remain free in life-threatening situations, but, otherwise, foreigners will have to cough up for healthcare services, say experts.

The Russian government has ratified new regulations governing medical treatment for foreigners. Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev signed them into law this week, overriding the previous set of regulations dating back to 2005.

The main difference is that not only state-run or municipal medical facilities but also self-employed healthcare practitioners are now allowed to provide medical services to temporary and permanent foreign-residents in Russia. This essentially means private clinics, the first deputy chairperson of the Federation Council committee on social policy, Lyudmila Ponomareva, explained to RBTH.

In addition, foreign patients are now entitled to free healthcare, provided they are covered by compulsory health insurance.

According to Ponomareva, this also stems from the recent amendments – this time, to migration laws on employment of highly skilled migrants. Subject to the relevant foreign-worker quotas, Russian companies can invite and legally employ highly skilled specialists and pay the necessary contributions to the Compulsory Health Insurance Fund, which means that such foreigners can actually use their health insurance.

Just as before, first-aid for foreigners will be free. Furthermore, emergency treatment for life-threatening, sudden, and acute conditions or acute exacerbations of chronic diseases will also be free for foreigners at hospitals and clinics.

Otherwise, foreigners will have to pay for examination procedures and treatment, with the actual cost determined by specific agreements for paid healthcare services or voluntary health insurance contracts.

For routine health checks, foreigners will be required to either produce a documented guarantee of the obligation to pay for healthcare services provided, or they will be required to make an upfront payment. The 2005 rules stipulated that the two requirements be met simultaneously. Clinics providing the services are required to issue an invoice within 10 days of the treatment.

If any of the patient's prior medical records, lab results, or medical images are available, they need to be delivered to the attending doctor (this used to be almost an obligation for foreigners).

According to the head of the State Duma healthcare committee, Sergei Kalashnikov, the decree hardly changes the status of foreigners in Russia, in terms of healthcare.

Foreign residents in Russia mostly receive private healthcare services as it is, since they are not covered by compulsory health insurance. "Which is the right thing," said Kalashnikov. "They are not making any contributions to the funds, so why should we be paying for them."

The Duma deputy also pointed

out that Russians were actually in the same situation elsewhere in the world: they need to buy insurance policies entitling them to healthcare services. Importantly, chronic diseases are not covered by such insurance, and Russia has a reciprocal condition for foreigners as well.

Kalashnikov also reiterated that emergency aid remained free – something poorer foreign residents tend to make use of. For example, pregnant women in search of better quality health services come to Russia from less developed countries to have their children.

Alexander Saversky, president of the Patient Defense League (a national non-governmental organization) confirmed that almost the only way for a foreigner to receive medical treatment in Russia is to pay for it.

"I doubt that many foreigners will send requests to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to find out whether any agreement exists between Russia and their native countries on medical treatment. If you make no such request, then you should pay for healthcare," said Saversky.

Meanwhile, Ponomareva pinpointed a different problem: The overwhelming majority of foreigners who are entitled to travel to Russia visa-free lack voluntary health insurance contracts. While it is theoretically possible to legally bind them to buy voluntary health insurance policies, in practice it would be impossible to check if they have any with a visa-free regime in place.

*Source: Russia Beyond The Headlines, March 18, 2013* ■



## Better Health Care, Education to Resettled in Viet Nam

Arat Thin gazes at the ultrasound images on the computer, and hangs onto the doctor's every word as he explains how she and her soon-to-be-born baby are faring. It is 22-year-old Thin's second pregnancy, but it is the first time she has received a pregnancy check-up in her own village in Viet Nam's remote central region.

The first time she was pregnant, Thin had to walk an entire day along muddy mountain paths to visit a doctor at the nearest health center.

Today, she is receiving modern prenatal attention due - indirectly at least - to the construction of the Song Bung 4 hydropower project. Pa Pang, where Thin grew up, is a host community that has provided land for people who relocated from Thon 2 village to make way for the hydropower project. Today, thanks to the project, the village (now called Pa Pang-Thon 2), has a health center, among other modern amenities that are making life more convenient - and safer.

"I learned that I shouldn't work so hard in the fields while I'm pregnant, which I didn't know when I was pregnant with my first child."

- Arat Thin, 22, ethnic minority villager

"I'm very happy to be able to talk to the doctor," says Thin. "I learned that I shouldn't work so hard in the fields while I'm pregnant, which I didn't know when I was pregnant with my first child."

### Low-impact energy

When it is completed in 2014, the Song Bung 4 hydropower dam will help supply Viet Nam's growing need for energy. ADB has supplied \$196 million from ordinary capital resources for Song Bung 4, the first hydropower project it has supported in Viet Nam.

The project is crucial in terms of meeting power-generation demand for Central Viet Nam, but ADB has also focused on avoiding adverse impacts during the project's implementation. For the more than 1,000 Co Tu ethnic



minority members who have had to resettle, that has meant ensuring that their new homes in Pa Pang, or in one of three other villages, are improvements on their old ones.

Most of the villagers affected by the project have traditionally earned their livings through selling forest products, and through slash-and-burn agriculture. Most struggle on incomes below the national poverty line.

To ensure that the villagers who have been relocated have a better quality of life than they did before, the Song Bung 4 project has subsidized sturdy, new, wooden homes designed and built by the families themselves. The houses have toilets, electricity, and clean water. Pa Pang-Thon 2 - the first of the resettlement sites - has a primary school, a public road connecting it to other towns, along with the healthcare center. The other resettlement centers will also have the same amenities.

### Easy access to care

In Pa Pang, the new health center promotes growing awareness of the importance of staying healthy and preventing illness. The center bustles with visitors - children receiving regular vaccinations, the elderly coming for check-ups and consultations, and villagers dropping by to seek help from a health worker assigned by the local government.

"In addition to making regular visits to the health center in the village, I see more people visiting the district health center too, as it is much easier to reach with the new access road."

- Pham Hong Ha, vice head, district health center

"In addition to making regular visits to the health center in the village, I see more people visiting the district health center too, as it is much easier

to reach with the new access road. If villagers have any problems, they seek our advice and get a check-up," says Pham Hong Ha, vice head of the district health center.

Some older Co Tu villagers do not speak Vietnamese fluently, but that is not an obstacle to benefiting from the new facilities. With the assistance of a grant from the Japan Fund for Poverty Reduction for the Song Bung 4 project, selected locals have trained to become village health workers and medical go-betweens.

These go-betweens provide basic services and checkups, and help villagers who need to visit the village or district health centers.

The Japan Fund for Poverty Reduction has also provided critical medical equipment and furniture at the Pa Pang-Thon 2 health center.

### New school, brighter future

Just across from the health center, dozens of children from Pa Pang-Thon 2 Village are studying at a new primary school, which is also a byproduct of the hydropower project. The airy classrooms - equipped with previously unfamiliar essentials, such as chairs and desks - are a significant improvement on their former study environment. Po Loong Trim, a teacher at the school, says the classrooms have made a huge difference for neighborhood children.

"Students are much more motivated to come to school and learn. They are very happy to attend school and there's no more need for me to go looking for them at home anymore," he says.

Moving to a new home can be disruptive but the Song Bung 4 project is committed to ensuring that resettlement means better lives. "It's critical that even as we look to meet the country's electricity needs, that those affected by the new hydropower dam are given better facilities and the opportunity to make better lives for themselves," says Tomoyuki Kimura, ADB country director for Viet Nam.

One thing is for certain: with care from the local health center, Arat Thin's new baby will have a much better start in life now that the family is in the new village.

*Source: Asian Development Bank, April 17, 2013*



# Roads Connect Villages to Opportunity in Central India

**T**ractors, schoolchildren on bicycles, delivery men on overloaded motorbikes, and three-wheelers groaning with fresh vegetables are all a common sight on the 4.6-kilometer (km) road from Muhali village to the nearest town, Sehore.

Three once-isolated villages - Muhali, Shekhpura, and Wahidganj - in Sehore district of Madhya Pradesh State, Central India, are now connected to the Sehore market, and to schools, colleges, hospitals, and other modern amenities.

These villages, like all other villages in the state, are being connected by all-weather roads, in accordance with the guidelines laid down in India's Rural Roads Program, launched in 2000.

## Bringing traffic to the hinterland

Poor road connectivity has been a main underlying cause of poverty in India, impeding economic growth of India's rural areas. In support of the government's Rural Roads Program, ADB approved a \$400 million loan for Rural Roads Sector I Project in November 2003. At that time, about three quarters of people in Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh, two of India's poorest states, lived in rural areas that, for the most part, did not have all-weather roads. Many relied on earth tracks, unsuitable for motorized traffic and impassable during the rainy season.

"The project has connected rural communities in the two states to markets, district headquarters, and other centers of economic activity leading to overall socioeconomic development of project villages," said Hun Kim, country director of India Resident Mission of ADB.

When the project was completed in 2009, a total of 9,574 km of rural roads had been constructed, directly benefiting 3,207 towns and villages, or about 11 million people. Between December 2006 and December 2008,

in sample project villages, the number of households living below the poverty line decreased by 4.7%, 1.8% more than in villages not affected by the new roads.

"By providing connectivity with educational institutions, health facilities, technology, and markets, [roads] open up a whole new world to rural communities."

— Aruna Sharma, additional chief secretary, Rural Development, Government of Madhya Pradesh

"The rural road network has ensured that villages are linked with high quality roads, irrespective of population," says Aruna Sharma, additional chief secretary in charge of Rural Development for the Government of Madhya Pradesh. "By providing connectivity with educational institutions, health facilities, technology, and markets, [roads] open up a whole new world to rural communities."

## Making the grade

Twelfth grader Priya Berai, 17, travels to and from school by bus from Shekhpura to nearby Chandbad. Because transportation is more reliable now, parents are more willing to send their children, especially daughters, to schools and colleges in neighboring towns. ADB estimates that bus fare on the project road has been reduced by about 11%, since vehicle-operating costs have decreased, given the smooth ride on the new roads.

Prem Narayan runs a private bus service for children of farmers from Muhali village to the Chandrasekhar Azad Higher Secondary School in Sehore. Before the road, "absenteeism was high among both students and teachers," he says, "especially during

the rainy season when roads were unsuitable for motorized traffic."

"Today with higher enrollments, I transport around 40 students in my bus each trip," says Narayan, "and cover a distance of 8 km in one hour with stops for pick up."

## Life saving care

"Polio immunization for young children has become possible, and supplies of iron and vitamin A for pregnant women, along with food supplements for severely malnourished infants, reach the village through the government (health services) network."

— Krishna Sawhney, 40, healthcare worker

Thanks to the roads, rural healthcare in Madhya Pradesh, where nearly all births take place in government healthcare facilities, has also improved.

Krishna Sawhney, 40, a health worker who has been in charge of a preschool childcare center in Muhali for the past 15 years, says the new road



from Sehore to Muhali has reduced deaths in delivery and helped improve the health of local children.

"I'm thankful for the regular visits from health workers from the Primary Health Center," she says. "Polio immunization for young children has become possible, and supplies of iron and vitamin A for pregnant women, along with food supplements for severely malnourished infants reach the village through the government (health services) network."

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## Roads Connect

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### The pulse of the market

In Muhali, connectivity has boosted farmers' incomes by increasing the amount of produce they can take to the market to sell and getting there faster and more smoothly has meant less spoilage on the way.

Before the new road, farmer Kamal Singh would only go to market rarely, and then, he carried his 25-30 kg loads on his head. Now Singh transports up to 3 metric tons of grain by tractor to the wholesale market and uses the tractor to carry back the fertilizer he needs.

"Due to faster access to the market, I can get a better price for my crops," says Singh, 35. "Now, with frequent trips, I can feel the pulse of the market and sell my goods only if I get a good price."

In the past, Singh cultivated only one crop per year - wheat - on his 1-hectare farm in Shekhpura. His family consumed most of what he produced. Now, thanks to his interactions in the market in Sehore, Singh has learned modern cropping techniques from other farmers, who inspired him to expand his wares. He now produces two or three additional cash crops every year, such as soya, pulses, and sugar cane, which he sells in the market, boosting his income.

Many others are also benefitting from better roads. Ashok Gaur, 32, is secretary of the government-run dairy cooperative, the Doodh Samiti Shekhpura, which supplies an average of 400 liters of milk per day to Bhopal. He manages the day-to-day operations of the cooperative, including transporting the milk in a tanker to Bhopal, nearly 40 kilometers east.

"The days are gone when we used bullock-carts to transport the milk, which would often spoil on the way in hot weather," he says.

Source: Asian Development Bank, April 22, 2013 ■

## Brunei Boosting Postgraduate Scholarships

The University of Brunei Darussalam in the rich southeast Asian country of Brunei is keen to entice international graduates to enroll on its Graduate Research Scholarship programme. Joining the league of many countries which see international education as a means of enriching the nation, Brunei's flagship institution started a generous scholarship scheme in 2010 and is reporting plans to expand its reach.

"International students bring with them a wealth of experience from all sorts of universities so they enliven our student population as well as contribute to the research in the priorities of the university," said David Young, deputy dean of the graduate studies and research office. The university is currently shortlisting applicants to begin their studies in early 2013.

Over the last two years, the university has awarded over 120 Graduate Research Scholarships to Masters and PhD students from 26 countries. The scheme, launched by the Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah, includes a tuition waiver, travel to Brunei Darussalam and back, a BND1,500 (US\$1,180) monthly stipend and allowances for field research.

According to Young, international students find it easy to adapt to the university as everyone speaks English and the cost of living is low – both selling points for its plans for future expansion of the scheme.

Forbes also ranks Brunei as the fifth richest nation out of 182 nations

"We're going to expand the scholarships we offer," said Young. "Our plan is to expand graduate intake and expand the proportion of the student body that is international graduate students. We are going to put an emphasis on more research students."

The university is also looking to attract international students with its Masters in Public Policy and Management programme launching in January 2013. "It's an elite Masters meant for regional leaders from emerging countries to study in Brunei and at different US universities," said Young.

Founded in 1985, the university is the oldest in the country and started with just 176 students. That number has swelled to 4,000 students today, 25% of whom are international. Young says most scholarship applicants come from surrounding Asian countries, the Middle East and Africa with a "smattering of US, European and Australian students".

Brunei has a population of just 400,000 but is a rich country: it has the second highest Human Development Index among southeast Asian countries after Singapore. And Forbes ranks Brunei as the fifth richest nation out of 182 nations due to its extensive petroleum and natural gas fields.

Source: The Pie News, July 12, 2012 ■



# Malaysia Adopts Google Apps, Chromebooks for Education

By Ellyne Phneah

Malaysia has adopted Google Apps and Chromebooks as part of the country's plans to integrate Web usage in a bid to reform its education system.

According to a blog post by the search giant on Wednesday, Malaysia adopted Google Apps for 10 million of its students, teachers and parents. In addition, primary and secondary schools will receive Chromebooks.

Malaysia's "Education Blueprint 2013-2025" released in September last year, is aimed at revolutionizing its education system through the integration of Web usage, Felix Lin, director of product management at Google, who wrote the blog post noted.

He added Malaysia's efforts to upgrade its educational system was not easy. To deploy technology across

the country, computers needed to be simple, manageable and secure, which was reflective in Google Chromebook, Lin noted.

The Chromebooks were also a "cost-efficient option" at scale, in addition to being easy to setup and secure, he added. Citing a study conducted by research firm IDC, Google learned Chromebooks would yield three-year cost of ownership savings of US\$1,135 for each computer, required 69 percent less hours to deploy and 92 percent fewer hours to manage.

Malaysia's announcement is also indicative of a movement by school systems to recognize the power of Web in education, Lin said. Another Asian country, the Philippines, had also "Gone



Google" with the country's Department of Education moving its systems to the cloud with Google Apps for Education, he pointed out.

"The Web gives our children and students new opportunities to access the world's information and work collaboratively," Lin said. "We look forward to working with national and regional leaders to make the most of the Web with Google Apps and Chromebooks and help them provide the best opportunities to every student."

Source: ZDNet Asia, April 11, 2013

## East Asia Universities 'Gain Ground in World Rankings'

By Judith Burns

Universities in East Asia have gained ground on western institutions in the latest university reputation rankings.

Oxford and Cambridge remain in "an elite top six of Anglo-American super-brands", according to Times Higher Education magazine's 2013 rankings.

But the survey also shows that three UK universities have fallen out of the top 100 since 2011.

"Outside the chosen few there is cause for alarm," said rankings editor Phil Baty.



Cambridge came third and Oxford fourth in the rankings, behind Harvard in first place and Massachusetts Institute of Technology in second.

There were 12 UK universities in the global top 100 in 2011 when the tables were published for the first time. Now there are nine. The University of Leeds fell below the line this year. Sheffield University and the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine dropped down last year.

### 'Elite institutions'

The list is calculated from a survey of leading scholars who are asked to rate leading institutions in terms of impact on their own subject areas.

"There is some good news for the UK, but only for a handful of its elite institutions," said Mr Baty.

"Traditionally, the strength in

depth of the UK system has been one of its great features. Having a large number of institutions with truly world-class standing has delivered huge returns for the whole sector and the wider economy. However, it now seems that a gap is opening up between the very best and the rest.

"With the coalition government attempting to introduce an aggressive market in UK higher education and concentrating increasingly scarce resources on a select few, there is likely to be further trouble ahead for all but a small elite group."

London based universities Imperial, UCL and LSE improved their positions as did Edinburgh University while Manchester University made it to 47th place.

King's College maintained its place in the top 70 global universities. Bristol University remained in the top 100, despite slipping down the rankings since 2011.

Mr Baty said that while the table was dominated by western universities,

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## East Asia Universities

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East Asian institutions were quietly gaining ground.

The University of Tokyo is now in ninth place, Japan has five institutions in the top 100, Singapore and Hong Kong three each, China and Korea two each and Taiwan one.

“We are seeing a trend of Asian universities rising, making more of a mark globally,” said Mr Baty.

### ‘Losing stature’

“Some UK institutions are losing stature by comparison and it is partly because of an acknowledgement by some East Asian governments that spending on universities is vital to their economies.”

Mr Baty had advice for England’s universities minister: “If I were David Willetts I would take this table to the Treasury and argue that we need to protect university funding in order to stay competitive.”

A spokeswoman for the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills said: “The UK has a global reputation for excellence in higher education. We have strong institutions, a world-class research base and dedicated staff.

“To stay ahead in the global race, we are protecting the research budget, making UK research more accessible and delivering a better student experience.”

Labour’s shadow universities minister Shabana Mahmood said the downward trend should cause concern: “With other nations around the world investing heavily in higher education with governments that are more welcoming to legitimate international students, the government should take a long hard look at its policies.”

Wendy Piatt, of the Russell Group, urged the government to “concentrate investment where it really matters”. She added that UK universities punched well above their weight with seven in the global top 50 despite the government spending less on

## Asia-Pacific Launches New Platform on Quality of Education



On 27-28 March 2013 in Bangkok, the Network on Education Quality Monitoring in the Asia-Pacific (NEQMAP) was established and launched.

This new regional platform aims to provide a forum for countries/ jurisdictions in the Asia-Pacific region to reflect, debate and share experience, lessons learnt and best practice in monitoring educational quality. Such a network has not previously existed in the region, unlike in other parts of the world.

Organized by UNESCO Bangkok, the inaugural NEQMAP meeting brought together experts from education institutions, think tanks and Ministries of Education in Australia, Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), Hong Kong SAR (China), India, Japan, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Nepal, New Zealand, Republic of Korea,

Thailand and Viet Nam.

Representatives of regional institutions including the Secretariat of the Pacific Board for Educational Assessment (SPBEA), based in Fiji, SEAMEO, UNESCAP and UNICEF’s Regional Office for East Asia and the Pacific (EAPRO) also attended the meeting.

The first day of the meeting allowed for information sharing on current practices of monitoring educational quality in the region, with presentations of experiences from a range of countries/ jurisdictions. There was also discussion of some of the collaborative initiatives around educational quality monitoring which are underway in some of the sub-regions of the Asia-Pacific.

Day 2 focused on discussion about the network’s structure and

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higher education than most developed countries.

“We are concerned that our global competitors in the US, East Asia and Europe are pumping billions into higher education, and as these results show money really matters.”

Nicola Dandridge, of Universities UK, said the tables showed that the UK continues to have the second-strongest university system in the world after the US but: “We should remain acutely aware that other countries are investing more than the UK and our

reputation as a world-class provider of higher education is not a foregone conclusion.”

Sally Hunt, of the University and College Union, added: “It is unlikely that recent negative headlines around the world about the UK threatening to deport students, coupled with changes to how students are classified for migration figures, will have done much to enhance our reputation on the international stage.”

Source: BBC News, March 4, 2013



# Billions Extra to Reform Education in Australia

Australia announced a AU\$14.5 billion (US\$15.2 billion) plan to boost funding for schools Sunday in one of the country's biggest education reforms in decades.

Under the proposal, the extra cash will be made available over six years from 2014 with the government setting a goal for Australian schools to be among the world's top five in reading, numeracy and science by 2025.

"A world class school system is a key part of a strong economy for the future," said Prime Minister Julia Gillard, a former education minister.

"It will help every Australian child get the best education possible and secure a high-wage, high skilled job."

Gillard plans to make education a central pitch in her bid to be re-elected to government in September, with her ruling Labor currently badly lagging in opinion polls following a bitter party leadership struggle.

Of the money, the government would put in AU\$2 for every AU\$1 in extra investment made by the country's states and territories to allow classrooms and teachers to be better resourced.

Gillard urged state and territory



leaders, who will meet in Canberra on Friday, to agree to the plan by June.

"This new money will help schools pay for specialist teachers and modern resources. It will make sure every school is properly funded and will help give our kids the best start in life," she said.

"It is vital that we as a nation seize this moment to make a difference for every child in every school for the long term."

The announcement follows the most comprehensive investigation of the way schools are funded in Australia in almost 40 years — the Gonski Review — which was commissioned by the government and released last year.

It found Australia was investing far too little in education, putting it at risk of slipping behind the rest of the world.

Part of Gillard's reform agenda is to make "Asia literacy" a key plank of future education strategy.

She has previously announced a plan to prioritize Asian languages to better equip future generations to deal with key regional partners such as China, South Korea, Japan, Indonesia and India.

The proposals would partly be paid for by deep funding cuts to universities, with the government on Saturday saying more than AU\$2 billion would be stripped from the sector, a move slammed by some education experts.

Glyn Davis, chairman of Universities Australia, the peak body representing the sector, said the cuts would "place severe strain on a sector that has been encouraged to expand enrolments."

"The announcement will be condemned by those who understand that Australia's university sector is crucial to national productivity growth, industrial diversification and long-term economic transformation," he said.

*Source: Agence France-Presse (AFP), April 15, 2013* ■

## Asia-Pacific Launches

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working modalities as well as proposed activities. As a result, the network's creation was endorsed and an Inaugural Statement adopted, echoing the conviction that "countries/jurisdictions of the Asia-Pacific region, with diverse experiences from a wide range of perspectives, have tremendous potential to learn from each other and synergize efforts in improving the way learning is monitored and in using assessments to monitor learning in the region."

NEQMAP will serve to strengthen education systems to improve the quality of education in Asia-Pacific

through collaborative efforts. The network will provide a forum for exchanging of expertise, experiences and lessons to improve the quality of learning in education systems of countries/jurisdictions in Asia-Pacific, with the eventual aim of influencing policy reforms and improving student learning.

While the network will primarily focus on issues relating to assessment to ensure alignment with curriculum and pedagogy, other closely related topics such as teachers will also be addressed. Activities of the network would focus on research, knowledge

sharing and capacity building among all stakeholders of the network and beyond.

Membership in NEQMAP is open to institutions/organizations/associations which are strongly linked to quality of education, specifically assessment, curriculum and/or pedagogy issues. Individual membership to the network is also possible in exceptional cases and for a limited number. A call for members will soon be launched.

*Source: UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, April 23, 2013* ■

# India Tech Tycoon Donates US\$2.3 Bil.

*By Penny MacRae, AFP*

**I**ndian software tycoon Azim Premji said on February 25 he has given US\$2.3 billion to an education charity that he controls, reportedly the biggest charitable donation in the country's recent history.

It is his second recent big donation after giving almost US\$2 billion to the charity in 2010, and came shortly after he joined the Giving Pledge club set up by Microsoft co-founder Bill Gates and billionaire investor Warren Buffet.

In the February 25 donation, the chairman of software firm Wipro transferred shares worth US\$2.3 billion from the company to a trust which controls the education charity Azim Premji Foundation, a company statement said.

The billionaire, who inherited a cooking oil company and transformed it into India's third-biggest outsourcing services firm, said the trust will use the funds to scale up the foundation's activities "significantly."

The charity seeks to boost the quality of India's overstretched education system by improving teacher



quality and setting up model schools.

The Business Standard newspaper and other media reported it was the biggest one-off donation to charity in India in modern times.

The media-shy tycoon is India's third wealthiest individual with a net worth of some US\$16 billion, according to a 2012 Forbes rich list.

Premji, whose trust funds initiatives including rural education and teacher training, has long promoted education as a way to tackle India's deep poverty.

He told a recent World Economic Forum in Davos that "education is perhaps the most powerful enabler of human life and equity."

A few days ago, he became the first Indian to join the Giving Pledge

club, which encourages the world's wealthiest to donate at least half their fortunes to charity.

Those who are "privileged to have wealth should contribute significantly to try and create a better world for the millions who are far less privileged," Premji said when joining the club.

The billionaire's donation comes amid growing disquiet in India about the yawning divide between the country's burgeoning wealthy class and the hundreds of millions still living in deep poverty.

A 2012 report on philanthropy by global consultancy Bain noted a "striking imbalance" in India, noting it was home to one of the world's fastest-growing wealthy populations but also one in three of the world's malnourished children.

While the report noted that philanthropy was on the rise, it added there was "significant room for improvement if India is benchmarked against the U.S., one of the world's leaders in private giving."

With Premji's latest donation, his educational charitable trust's shareholding in Wipro will go up to nearly 20 percent.

*Source: Agenc France-Presses (AFP), February 25, 2013* ■

## Low South Korean Birth Rate Raises Fears

*By Simon Mundy in Seoul*

**F**orced to decide between giving her daughter siblings or an expensive education, Hong Sung-ok saw little choice.

"I can't afford not to send my child to private tuition, because everyone else does," says the 47-year-old insurance saleswoman.

"I spend more than half my income on tutors and childcare expenses – it's really expensive...That's why I decided to have only one child."

Ms Hong's decision is the new norm in South Korea, where the fertility rate has fallen to the lowest

level in the developed world. The country had a birth rate of 1.2 children per woman in 2010: even China, with its long-established one-child policy, had a rate of 1.6.

The phenomenon has provoked growing consternation at the demographic implications, with South Korea predicted to age more rapidly over the next 40 years than any other country. This could have a damaging impact on productivity and fiscal stability: the ratio of workers to elderly people is on course to fall from 4.5 to 1.2 by 2050, according to the OECD,

the Paris-based group of countries which tries to promote stable economic growth.

"Korea is quickly turning into an aged society," says Kwon Young-sun, an analyst at Nomura. Mr Kwon says the low birth rate is linked to a strong cultural emphasis on education: about three quarters of high-school students have private tuition and a similar proportion go on to university.

Parents worry that their children will struggle to find a good job, or even a suitable spouse, without a degree – and the steep associated costs discourage many from having more than one child. Education costs are a big contributor to South Korea's

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## Low South Korean

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soaring household debt, one of the heaviest burdens in the world at more than 160 per cent of income and a major drag on domestic consumption.

Park Geun-hye, elected last month as the country's next president, has promised to tackle the problem by expanding state provision of childcare, and halving tuition fees. But critics say the latter measure will only increase the proportion of children going to university: a trend blamed for contributing to graduate unemployment of more than a fifth, as many university leavers hold out for a job befitting their qualifications rather than take an unskilled role.

The government has tried to

weaken the perception of university education as a prerequisite for success. It put pressure on big companies to hire more non-graduates, and opened 21 "Meister" high schools where pupils are given technical training for specific fields such as shipbuilding and semiconductor manufacturing.

But even optimists admit it will take years to change perceptions: a government study two years ago found that 93 per cent of parents expect their children to attain at least a four-year university degree.

"It's a very competitive society – sometimes too competitive," says Lee Jong-wha, an economic adviser to Lee Myung-bak, the departing president.

Up to secondary school level, South Korea's education system is world-leading – its 15-year-olds came



first in the developed world in literacy and maths, and third in science, in a 2010 study by the OECD. But the same body warns that the proliferation of universities resulting from surging demand has "inevitably led to some deterioration in the quality of Korea's tertiary sector, which does not score high in international rankings".

The OECD recommends that the state concentrates public funding on the highest-ranked universities. But according to Mr Lee, who will soon return to a position in academia, a broader change of approach is needed.

"If you attend classes here, there's virtually no discussion at all," he says. "The professor speaks for 99 per cent of the time, and there's no question-and-answer. I'm not saying we need to switch to a western education system – ours continues to produce good-quality students – but as our wider industry structure becomes more innovative and technology-focused, it requires graduates with creative ability."

Beyond the economic concerns, some worry that young people are being burdened with excessive expectations and spending too much of their childhood in the classroom.

"Students at all levels are suffering from stress," says Lee Young-tak, an official at the Korean Teachers' Union. "The system puts too much emphasis on college admission and it does not nurture students' talents."

Source: *Financial Times*, January 2, 2013



## ABOUT CACCI

*The Confederation of Asia-Pacific Chambers of Commerce and Industry (CACCI) is a regional grouping of apex national chambers of commerce and industry, business associations and business enterprises in Asia and the Western Pacific.*

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