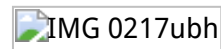


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THREE MEGA TRENDS SUPPORTING THE ASIAN CENTURY – DEMOGRAPHICS, URBANISATION AND DIGITAL REVOLUTION



USM, PENANG, May 2016 - The campus community as well as the public were recently treated to another series of International Public Lecture, this time by a Senior Economist from the Japan Research Institute, Dr. Keiichiro Oizumi, who shared his views on three mega trends supporting the Asian Century (referring to the 21st century), namely demographic transition, urbanisation and digital revolution.

In his lecture entitled ‘Mega Trends in East Asia – What’s Happening? What’ll Happen?’ held at the Dewan Persidangan Universiti here, Oizumi explained that the birth rate in Asia is declining, and it is a certainty that aging of society will accelerate.

“This also means that the population of East Asia will begin to decline from 2050, and this demographic transition will have an impact on the economy and society of East Asia,” he said.

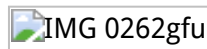


Oizumi said further: “The second trend is urbanisation, where we see large numbers of people are flooding or migrating into big cities better known as megapolises, where they are actually the national capitals, such as Shanghai, Beijing, Tokyo, Seoul, Bangkok, Jakarta and Kuala Lumpur.”

He added that the urban population in Asia had risen to 56% in 2015 compared to less than 20% back in 1950.

“These megapolises not only have a large population but there is a tendency for its economic level to be significantly higher than the rest of the country. For example Thailand’s national GDP per capital is around \$6,000 but Bangkok’s is around \$20,000; similarly Malaysia’s per capital GDP is above \$10,000 but Kuala Lumpur’s is above \$20,000.

“That is why when Japanese businessmen come to KL, they conclude that Malaysia is a fully developed nation,” he quipped.

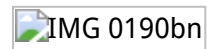


Thirdly is the digital revolution where the rise of the internet and smartphones is bringing about a fundamental change to the socio-economy of many East Asian countries.

Oizumi quoted an example where according to a World Bank report, among the poorest 20 percent of households, nearly 7 out of 10 have a mobile phone. The poorest households are more likely to have access to mobile phones than to toilets or clean water.

“We find ourselves in the midst of the greatest information and communications revolution in human history; we must take advantage of this rapid technological change and use new digital tools to make the world more prosperous and inclusive.

“Hence to make Asian Century a reality, the digital divide or digital gap between the urban and rural areas needs to be narrowed, as well as between the mega regions and the rest of the country,” he added while stressing also the importance of the younger generation who will lead and drive the efforts in making the 21st century truly an Asian Century.



Earlier, the USM Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic and International Affairs), Professor Dato’ Dr. Ahmad Shukri Mustapa Kamal, in his welcoming speech, said he was pleased with the attendance of more than 100 participants, mainly from the university staff and students, government agencies and private sector at the international public lecture.

“I hope that more public lectures such as these would be organised by the university in the future, which acts as a forum to deliberate and discussed communities’ problems and issues to find collective solutions, besides being a way of strengthening university-community relationship,” said Ahmad Shukri.

Meanwhile, according to the Director of the Japan Foundation Kuala Lumpur, Koichi Horikawa, he was happy to know that a variety of cultural activities such as academic interaction between Japan and Malaysia have been carried out, which allowed both sides to share opinions about the issues faced by Asian countries.

“Through this kind of lecture, I hope that we are able to seek out the solutions on these issues with the collaboration between experts from Malaysia and Japan,” added Horikawa.

Among those also present at the lecture were Eri Teramoto, representing the Consul-General of Japan in Penang and the Dean of USM School of Social Sciences, Professor Dr. Azlinda Azman.

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