

AsiaForum

The Asia Forum of Wellington

The Asia Forum Report for 2008

2008 saw another successful year of well-attended, stimulating meetings. As in previous years we received warm support from a number of distinguished individuals and opinion leaders from various interests and professional backgrounds, both from abroad and from New Zealand, in sharing their perspectives with Asia Forum. As usual our Forum continued to focus on off-the-record discussion and exchange of views on numerous topical Asian issues that occurred and developed during the year.

Asia Forum continues to strive and focus its effort on facilitating informed debate and the concerns of New Zealanders in engaging with Asia. The Forum gratefully values the opportunity to collaborate and cooperate with the NZ Institute of International Affairs, the Wellington Regional Chamber of Commerce, and the education institutions and business organisations in Wellington. We also value the support and encouragement of the Asia NZ Foundation, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, and the diplomatic community in Wellington. One unusual event in 2008 that deserves special mention, and thanks, was the Wine Quiz so ably and entertainingly hosted at the British High Commission by Stephen and Susie Evans. We are grateful also to British High Commissioner George Fergusson for his support of this evening.

Our 2008 programme continued the format of previous years with a range of high profile speakers from New Zealand and abroad leading the discussions. Our meetings were mostly held monthly in the offices of leading law firms Bell Gully, Russell McVeagh, Minter Ellison, and at the Hong Kong Shanghai Bank, who generously provided refreshments as well as meeting facilities. Our gratitude also goes to Catalyst IT Ltd for hosting our website. Their hospitality, generosity and continuous support are much appreciated.

Highlight of the Year

The highlight for 2008 was a reception hosted by Bell Gully on 8th October to mark the “50th Anniversary of Diplomatic Engagement between New Zealand and Indonesia”.

Asia Forum is grateful for the generous support from Simon Watt, and the Rt Hon Paul East, of Bell Gully for this significant event.

Vision for the Future/Looking Ahead

Asia Forum has over the years been led and chaired by Farib Sos on a voluntary basis. He has been assisted by a group of colleagues including Colin Bell, Douglas Day, Sokha Mey, and Tim Beal.

Asia Forum is embarking on 13 years of operation since it began in 1996 and it is a great challenge to sustain and maintain its activities. The Forum is keen to have additional input and support from interested individuals and organisations to ensure its continued existence, as a viable entity in providing a positive contribution towards New Zealand-Asia relations.

Asia Forum would welcome additional support in every aspect from any individual or organisation to help sustain its activities in the years ahead.

Contribution

The Asia Forum has benefited greatly from the support of various organisations, notably and extensively from Belly Gully. However, there are certain running costs, especially pertaining to communications, which have to be covered. The Asia Forum is therefore seeking contributions from organisations or individuals who support our objectives and who wish to join us in providing an opportunity for informed and stimulating discussion of contemporary Asian issues amongst opinion leaders.

Those interested in considering such a contribution should contact Farib Sos, whose contact details are shown below.

The meetings in 2008 were as follows:

Stephen Jacobi

Executive Director of the New Zealand International Business Forum
Wednesday 27 February

NEW ZEALAND AND JAPAN: STRENGTHENING NEW ZEALAND UNDERSTANDING AND CONNECTION

Professor Anthony Milner

Faculty of Asian Studies, Australian National University
Tuesday 11 March

AUSTRALIA AND ASIA: REFLECTIONS ON THE TASKS FACED BY PRIME MINISTER KEVIN RUDD

Dr Richard Grant

Executive Director, Asia:NZ Foundation
Thursday 17 April

ASIA'S CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN THE COMING YEARS: THE VIEW FROM ASIA:NZ

Charles Finny

CEO, Wellington Regional Chamber of Commerce
Tuesday 6 May

PREMATURE OBITUARY: REVISITING THE FUTURE OF APEC

HE Mr Munawar Saeed Bhatti

High Commissioner of Pakistan
Wednesday 18 June

MANDATE FOR CHANGE: CHALLENGES FOR THE NEW PAKISTANI GOVERNMENT

Dr Bahtiar Effendy

Senior Lecturer, Faculty of Political Science, Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University, Indonesia
Thursday 26 June

ISLAM IN CONTEMPORARY INDONESIAN POLITICS

HE Mr Toshihiro Takahashi

Ambassador of Japan
Wednesday 9 July

REINVIGORATING THE JAPAN-NZ RELATIONSHIP IN THE WAKE OF PRIME MINISTER CLARK'S VISIT: THE JAPANESE PERSPECTIVE

Peter Wilson and Tim Kearns

Tuesday 5 August

ENGAGING NORTH KOREA: TWO NZERS SPEAK OF THEIR PERSONAL EXPERIENCES WORKING IN DPR KOREA

H.E. Mr George Fergusson

British High Commissioner

Wednesday 22 October

BRITAIN AND GLOBALISED ASIA

Karen Sewell

Secretary of Education

Tuesday 4 November

SERIOUSLY EDUCATING ABOUT ASIA

Details of the Asia Forum programme can be found at http://www.apri.ac.nz/Asia_Forum/

Executive Chair

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