

## FROM THE EDITOR

### Of tailwinds and headwinds

Long-time readers of these pages are more than familiar with disruption, and the current shift in the world's economic and political tectonic plates is assuming even greater interest for many of us. This, of course, is not just restricted to Brexit and China's Belt and Road policy, or the Trumpian perspective on tariffs, or even immigration, where in 2015, Asia surpassed Europe as the largest hub of international migrants. According to the Asian Development Bank report, 'Asia 2050: Realizing the 20th Century', if China's stable economic growth continues, Asia will produce 50 percent of the world's gross domestic product by 2050, a level not seen since the 1700s before the Industrial Revolution. As Confucius once said: "The grass must bend when the wind blows across it." And so must we.

In this edition of Asian Management Insights, we explore this further. The pace of change is staggering, says Amit Gupta. Although this makes it increasingly difficult to predict the future, he stresses that the farsighted policies and progressive ideas now being promoted in Asia will stand the region in good stead as it embraces disruption with confidence. Also optimistic is the global chief economist of The Economist Intelligence Unit, Simon Baptist, who discusses the trends that are likely to shape the future global economic outlook in our feature interview.

Although Japan is making the most of current tailwinds to revive its sluggish economy based on three elements of aggressive monetary easing, flexible fiscal policy, and structural reforms, Odd Per Brekk considers the success of Abenomics to be resting precariously on expectations. Meanwhile in the case of Vietnam, the former advisor to the prime minister, Pham Chi Lan, notes that although the agricultural reforms introduced post Doi Moi (1986) have helped lift the nation out of extreme poverty, agriculture in Vietnam is still in need of flexibility, efficiency, modernisation and innovation, including the adoption of biotech, in order to take economic growth to the next level.

Policy disagreements are nothing new to economists, says Joergen Oerstroem Moeller, who questions whether or not the time has come to redesign productivity, away from minimising the cost of production for plants to minimising the cost for society as a whole in order to deliver a higher national income. In a similar vein, Miguel Soriano explores one of the greatest paradoxes in today's world: The people with the most limited resources are the ones paying the highest fees for financial products and services. Poverty mitigation was also top of mind for Tung Nhu Nguyen, who says public-private partnership initiatives, which increased six-fold in developing countries, need to be aligned with this strategic social goal, keeping in mind pro-poor evaluation benchmarks.

Even family businesses, which represent 85 percent of Asia-Pacific businesses, are experiencing a transformation, notes Annie Koh. The new ventures, she says, feel like start-ups but are supported and funded by the family business. Meanwhile, Chandrasekhar Sripada zeroes in on what makes for an outstanding workplace that draws in the best talent in the era where robots and people will begin to work together, regardless of the industry sector, size or life stage of a firm. Still on change and transformation, Low Kee Yang and I explore ASEAN's various legal systems and their impact on doing business in the region: What may work for a local can prove to be a handicap for the foreign investor and we invite you to share your ideas and experiences through [editorami@smu.edu.sg](mailto:editorami@smu.edu.sg).

And finally, Eric Sandosham provides a much-needed fresh perspective on organising business intelligence and analytics, one of the most talked about practices in the last decade, in which data-driven approaches are applied to improve business performance and reduce uncertainty and equivocality, all part of change. Our Special Supplement, which is exclusively available online at <https://cmp.smu.edu.sg/ami>, takes this practice a leap further to show managers how firms can effectively deploy human minds and intelligent machines in the workplace.

On this note, I am reminded of what Amazon's Jeff Bezos had to say on change, "What we need to do is always lean into the future; when the world changes around you and when it changes against you—what used to be a tailwind is now a headwind—you have to lean into that and figure out what to do because complaining isn't a strategy." Even for policy wonks.



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