Asia's Rise or Fall: Challenges and Opportunities in the XXI Century

(Abstract)

Jose Ramos-Horta
Abstract of the Thirteenth D.T. Lakdawala Memorial Lecture by
Dr. Jose Ramos-Horta

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THE THIRTEENTH D.T. LAKDAWALA MEMORIAL LECTURE

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Asia’s Rise or Fall: Challenges and Opportunities in the XXI Century

Dr. Jose Ramos-Horta

Institute of Social Sciences
8 Nelson Mandela Road, New Delhi – 110 070
Tel:43158800, 43158801, Fax: 43158850, 43158823
Email: issnd@issin.org, Website: www.issin.org
D.T. Lakdawala

Born in 1916 in Surat, Dhanshukhlal Tulsidas Lakdawala, affectionately called “Saheb”, was a product of the then School of Economics and Sociology, University of Bombay. He started his career as a faculty member in the department of Economics of the School in the early 1940s and subsequently rose to become professor and director of the department, a position he held till 1978.

Public finance and fiscal policy were the areas of Dr. Lakdawala’s specialization. His early work was on justice in taxation. The concept of justice was important to him throughout his life. This was reflected in his special concern for the interests of millions of unorganized workers of the country, who, in Lakdawala’s view, had been continuously neglected in the face of aggressive demands by the organized work force.

Dr. Lakdawala endeared himself to the working class in this country through the two consumer price index committees he headed. The first, in 1958, examined whether the expenditure pattern of the working class in Bombay city had undergone change since 1932-33; the second, in 1963, examined the readjustment in the then existing series of consumer price index numbers, more particularly with respect to the housing index and its linkages with the new series.

The Lakdawala Committee found the practice of freezing the housing index objectionable. It was corrected and linked to the 1960-based series. Consequently, thanks to Lakdawala, the industrial workers were saved the loss that they would have otherwise suffered in the transition from the old to the new index.

As the Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission (1977-80), Dr. Lakdawala’s major contribution was to conditionalize the growth rate target with the provisions of reduction in the proportion of people below the poverty line and a substantial increase in employment. He also advocated a higher calorie norm for the rural poor.

In Dr. Lakdawala we had an ardent advocate for decentralised planning. At the Institute of Social Sciences, he encouraged and helped chart research studies in political and economic decentralization.

Dr. Lakdawala’s creativity extended beyond the academic world into the field of institution-building as well. He was the founder-director of the Sardar Patel Institute of Economic and Social Research, Ahmedabad, and also the honorary director of the Bombay-based Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy. Dr. Lakdawala was the Chairman of the Institute of Social Sciences, New Delhi from its inception till his untimely death on 16 April 1992.

This annual lecture series has been instituted by the Planning Commission at the Institute of Social Sciences in memory of, and as a humble tribute to this eminent economist, who above all was extraordinarily humane. □
Jose Ramos-Horta

The former President of Timor-Leste (2007 to 2012) and Nobel Laureate Dr. José Ramos-Horta is the United Nations Secretary-General's Special Representative and Head of the UN Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNIOGBIS). In 1996 Dr. Ramos-Horta was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize with Bishop Carlos Belo of Timor-Leste. Dr. Ramos-Horta brings with him more than three decades of diplomatic and political career in the service of peace and stability in Timor-Leste and beyond.

Dr. Ramos-Horta has served as his country's Foreign Minister and as Prime Minister. After Timor-Leste achieved independence in 2002, Ramos-Horta was appointed as the country's first foreign minister. He served in this position until his resignation on 25 June 2006.

On 26 June, following the resignation of Prime Minister Mari Alkatiri, Dr. Ramos-Horta was appointed acting Prime Minister by then President, Xanana Gusmão. Two weeks later, on 10 July 2006, he was sworn in as the second Prime Minister of Timor-Leste. On 11 February 2008, Dr. Ramos-Horta was injured when he was shot during an assassination attempt but recovered and resumed his role as President.

Dr. Ramos-Horta has been awarded honorary doctorate degrees by numerous universities in Australia, Japan, Thailand, the Philippines, the Republic of Korea, Portugal, Brazil and the US. He is the Founder and for years Executive Director and lecturer with the Diplomacy Training Program of the University of New South Wales where he is also a Visiting Professor. He has lectured extensively in Australia, New Zealand, Thailand, Portugal, France, Germany and the US.

Dr. Ramos-Horta has been very active on international peace initiatives. He is the author of several books and other writings and he is fluent in five languages. Besides Tetum and Portuguese, his two mother tongues, he is fluent in English, French and Spanish.
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(Abstract)

Jose Ramos-Horta

The world has changed much. Asia is changing fast. And in the face of the financial and economic predicaments of the US and Europe, Asia must seek to be center stage and lead.

But to lead is to inspire, to be able to forge partnerships, build bridges and seek common ground.

Asia can and should lead on tackling the challenges we face in the 21st Century: we have resources to alleviate and finally eradicate poverty; we master sciences and technology; we possess know-how to lead the search for global answers to the challenges of climate change and the need for sustainable increase in food production.

Asia can and should lead on reversing environmental damage and ensuring sustainable development, while keeping up with the welfare of our peoples.

In our globalized world, Asia can lead only in partnership with other stakeholders, specially emerging countries. However, the challenges facing Asia as a whole are enormous and should not be underestimated.

Asia needs a roadmap of priorities and resource allocation to answer our challenges and it needs also leadership to establish and implement this roadmap, strengthening peaceful relations.

I believe that time has come for Asia to lead and guide the world while navigating the challenges of the 21st Century.

Asian leaders should consider a 30-year Asian roadmap for integrated, sustainable Human Development including goals of eradicating poverty, illiteracy, TB, malaria, etc. and restore the wealth and health of our forests, rivers and seas.

With half the world's population, Asians extract a lot more from our Planet to satisfy our needs of survival and development than any other peoples of the world.

For our own survival, in solidarity with our brothers and sisters from other parts of the world, we must act with vision and determination, we must do a lot more to free our people from extreme poverty and save our common Planet.

Together China, India, Pakistan, Japan, Republic of Korea, Indonesia, Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, the rich Gulf countries, have an unparalleled pool of know-how and financial resources to transform Asia in a prosperous, peaceful and happy region for the 4 billion people that live in our region that spreads from Istanbul to Jakarta, Timor-Leste and the Pacific Islands.
The XXIst Century will be Asia's Century, Asia's Age of Enlightenment, if a new Mahatma Gandhi emerges, who inspires and leads all, the 4 billion people of this vast region that extends from the doors of Constantinople to Dili, a region of great civilizations, religions and cultures, of great challenges and great possibilities; we need a new Mahatma Gandhi to unite us, to inspire, to have the courage to overcome the shackles of the past, face the present and adopt a roadmap to build a Future of Peace, Freedom and Prosperity.

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