**“Conversations On Turning 20”: From Antelope to Evolutionary Explorer: Ho Kwon Ping on 30 Years of Banyan and the Next Chapter in Travel**

When you get to the ripe young age of 20, you’re bound to collect lots of stories – not only about the past but lessons for the future.

As WiT marks its 20th year in 2025, we turn the spotlight on our community, our tribe pioneers and leaders, to tell their stories and share their views on the evolution of online travel and technology.

We ask them to look back on the past and their early days, reflect on the present and why this moment is pivotal for online travel and get them to imagine the future, the next 20.

This special WiT Studio series, “Conversations On Turning 20”, is the collective story of WiT.

As a Chinese saying goes, 以古为鉴，可以知兴替

“By using history as a mirror, one can understand the rise and fall of things.”

**Episode 19: Ho Kwon Ping, Chairman, Banyan Group**

“We’ve finally crossed the river.” That’s how Ho Kwon Ping (KP), Chairman of Banyan Group, describes the company’s 30-year journey from boutique pioneer to global player with 100 hotels and counting. But don’t expect him to slow down. In this rare, wide-ranging interview, KP is at his reflective—and provocative—best, covering everything from AI and geopolitics to moon hotels and family succession.

### 🎯 Why You Should Watch This Interview

* It’s a **masterclass in long-game entrepreneurship**, full of hard-won lessons and honest truths.
* KP delivers **sharp, nuanced takes** on the future of travel, technology, and Asia’s role in the world.
* His **signature metaphors and humor**—antelopes, crocodiles, and desert gazelles—make even heavy topics memorable.

### 🗺️ Key Takeaways

#### 1. **The Antelope Has Crossed the River**

For three decades, KP likened Banyan Group to an antelope stuck in a river of crocodiles—always fighting to survive. But now, with a strong financial base, a diversified brand portfolio, and operations in 25 countries, “we’ve made it to the far bank,” he says. The challenges ahead are no longer about survival, but adaptation—“the deserts, not the rainforest.”

#### 2. **Decentralisation is Here to Stay**

COVID-19 accelerated KP’s transformation into a self-declared “digital commuter,” with homes across Singapore, Phuket, Bangkok, and Japan. Banyan Group reflects this too: no single headquarters, but rather a decentralised, globally distributed operation. “You don’t need to be in an office to lead anymore,” he says.

#### 3. **Southeast Asia’s Tower of Babel—Solved by AI?**

KP calls out real-time AI-powered translation as a game-changer for intra-ASEAN travel. “When someone in Thailand can understand someone in the Philippines without needing English, that will have more impact on travel than budget airlines ever did.”

#### 4. **AI Will Exacerbate Inequality—But Not Kill Travel**

While optimistic about AI’s potential, KP warns it will worsen issues in economies like the Philippines that depend on BPO jobs. Yet, contrary to fears that remote work will reduce corporate travel, he sees the opposite: “Zoom accelerates decision-making. I travel more now than ever before.”

#### 5. **The Desert Teaches Wonder**

Reflecting on Banyan’s ventures in AlUla and the Middle East, KP speaks of bringing the “philosophy of wonderment” to each place—whether lush jungle or barren desert. “It’s about looking at every destination with newborn eyes.”

#### 6. **Succession: The Real Challenge is the Patriarch**

On family succession, KP is clear-eyed. “If the next generation fails, it’s the fault of the parents.” His focus now is letting his children learn to navigate conflict while he’s still around, so they aren’t unprepared when it truly matters.

#### 7. **A New World Order**

In one of his most poignant reflections, KP says we’re witnessing the end of Pax Americana and a return to a world of co-equal civilizations. “It’s not the Asian century. It’s the end of the Western-only model of civilization.”

### 🚀 Looking Forward: From Underwater to the Moon

He jokes about opening a Banyan on the moon—or underwater—but his point is serious: “The world is huge. And if you still wake up every day with excitement, there’s always a next one.”

When asked which property is his favorite?  
“The next one.”

**Watch the full interview to hear one of Asia’s most visionary hospitality leaders reflect on the past, grapple with the present, and dream about the future.**

📺 [Insert Video Link Here]  
🪧 #BanyanGroup30 #HospitalityLeadership #WiTConversations #AsiaTravel #HoKwonPing

**THE LAST 30 YEARS: OF ROLLERCOASTERS AND CROSSING THE RIVER**

11:02.22

A rollercoaster ride. um In fact, on our 30th anniversary, when we got everybody together, i I gave a talk where many of the people who have been with us a long time remember my analogy.

11:18.37

KP

And I said for the first time, I think we have crossed the danger point. The analogy I've used for the last 30 years when people ask me where we are is I said for 30 years we have been the antelope crossing the river in an African sort of environment, you know, where basically your animals all cross the river to get to the other side and in, I guess, seasonal migration.

11:41.95

KP

And then there are a crocodiles there. Some antelopes make it, some don't. And I've always said that we are like the antelope that cannot just stay at the and the comfort and protection of the home bank.

11:55.46

KP

Neither have we crossed to the far bank where you don't have new pastures. We are the antelope in the middle, very, very fraught with danger and with lots of crocodiles. For 30 years, I've said that about us, that we can not have we cannot rest assured that we can survive.

12:12.32

KP

um The only, i think, real difference now is that after 30 years, 100 hotels, which we will have by middle of this year, and and many other reasons, um and a very, very strong financial base, I actually can say we've crossed to the other side.

12:28.17

KP

Now, using the same analogy, when you've crossed to the other side, there's really a big vista ahead of you. There are mountains, there are deserts, there things that you're not familiar with if we came from the rainforest.

12:39.99

KP

um But there are going to be different challenges. But we're no longer in the middle of the river, just worried whether we will survive. We have definitely crossed. We are prosperous, but the challenges are ahead of a different nature, a desert, a mountain, not a rainforest. So it's different challenges.

13:02.00

KP

and And that's how I would characterize where we are today.

**AIN’T NO MOUNTAIN OR DESERT GOING TO KEEP HIM AWAY, AND WHY NOT THE MOON?**

13:47.15

KP

it hasn't morphed. We actually had a number of hotels in the desert. We had a beautiful piontree at Ras al-Khaimah, but unfortunately for various reasons, we decided to give it up. And we also have had held hotels in Bahrain and so on.

14:00.93

KP

And we still have hotels in Dubai and and so on. um But I think the the point here is the necessity to always treat each new place with excitement and wonderment and to see each new place as having some unique experience that a customer can enjoy.

14:21.73

KP

Now, to the extent that our Oula is very different, it's a desert and so on, we obviously have to be aware of the technical issues, right? Heat management, cold management, a lot of other issues we have to manage properly as professional hoteliers.

14:37.81

KP

But on the other hand, it's not that different. If you... if you ah If you decide that you're going to be the kind of person that will wake up every day with open eyes and wherever you are, you see the beauty of the world as it is, then it's not fundamentally and philosophically different to operate in Aula as it would be in Banyan Sri Bwahan, our property in Ubud, the one with no doors, no walls.

15:01.34

KP

where you could equally say the challenge of operating a property which has no doors, no walls in tropical Asia with the fear of insects, with the fear of rain and so on.

15:12.39

KP

And yet that has succeeded so well. So if you bring the fundamental attitude that everything you look at, you look at with new eyes, and you try to see the world in wonderment and to try to bring the wonders of the world to the customer, then the challenge becomes quite manageable.

15:31.81

KP

They become technical challenges. They're not they're not conceptual, psychological challenges because you're quite used to it.

15:41.85

KP

Everything you see It's new. So so somebody in our group was joking that, you know, in 50 years time, we should open a bio-tree on the moon and under the sea. And frankly, if the technology ever got that way, I don't think we would but would be flustered by it. I mean, I think waking up on the moon one day would be fantastic, but we ain't gonna handle to the technical issues.

44:41.94

KP

um We have, in fact, received some inquiries from people who want us to do a hotel underwater. That's much more, you know. if The Saudis were talking about things like that, but now with less money now, the Saudis are not no longer talking about grand projects. But clearly the idea of a hotel underwater is is not beyond the realm of um of imagination at all, where basically you stay underwater,

45:07.40

KP

and you basically can do all the diving underwater without having to worry about, you know, surfacing and so on because you'd be pressurized ah naturally. um ah those Those things are definitely stuff I'd love to do, but to me they're not like the end of all things. Doing something there, doing something on Antarctica,

45:27.28

KP

doing something beautiful in Africa, the world and the world beyond our world, the moon and and the oceans and so on, are all very exciting. Every part um of the world is an exciting place.

45:39.15

KP

And I think it's the ability and the passion to see things as but with a newborn's eye, basically, that you don't become jaded and say, oh, I've been there, done that, this is so boring.

**SO WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING AT NOW WITH A NEWBORN’S EYES?**

16:28.32

KP

Well, a lot of it is not the region that we're excited by per se, it's also the the newness of the region together with the opportunities. So, for example, one region that I'm particularly involved in right now, as I've said, ah i've got a place there, we're building a house there and i spend a lot of time there, would be a very old region, which is Japan.

16:49.20

KP

But Japan, you might have just read, has experienced a 30% year-on-year growth in tourism. It is the fastest growing tourism market in the whole world in terms of rate of growth.

17:01.05

KP

and Yet it's been around for you know thousands of years. And Japan is a good example because I've been looking at doing business development in Japan for the last 30 years. Never had a single project for 29 or 27 years.

17:13.75

KP

And then since three years ago, we've got six projects already. And now we've got seven to eight banyan trees in the pipeline.

17:34.90

KP

I think Eastern Europe is going to be more interesting also. um you know and And for us, for example, we're looking at the Americas. ah not only in Mexico, but even USA, which you could say is a very mature market, but for us is a new market. So, and and another area that we we've signed quite a number of deals would be the Turkic speaking regions of of you know Turkey, the Stan's,

18:01.63

KP

and the whole Central Asia area. we So those are all terribly exciting. We're opening up our first property, a safari camp in Tanzania, which I hope will be the beginning of Biontree's venturing into safari camps, which is a very natural part of what we would want to do.

18:19.41

KP

So, I mean, To us, there's so many interesting areas that um it's not one area. The whole world is a big place and there very many interesting areas that we continue to want to grow in.

**IT FEELS LIKE YOU’RE JUST BEGINNING, AFTER 30 YEARS!**

18:52.62

KP

I mean, that's why it's kind of funny. I mean, you know, my colleagues think I should be retiring by now and I probably should be. um But it's hard when you actually do see the world with excitement. I mean, I was so excited by Aula because there's a lot of information about Aula, not only um the the ruins of Hegra, which you might have gone to. Hegra is related to Petra in Jordan and the whole.

19:15.33

KP

So that whole cultural historical part of the world I did not know about. Then the geological part. um Actually, Aula is a site of a number of calderas, volcanic calderas.

19:28.56

KP

So it was, it used to be a volcanic region, which was under the sea. So when you look at things like that, you realize, you know, the world is a very big place and you've only hardly penetrated it. And it's, it's exciting.

**DID YOU EVER THINK YOU’D BE WHERE YOU ARE NOW? 90% OF SUCCESS IS SIMPLY SURVIVING**

19:56.44

KP

ah No, when we first started BioNTRI, there were only two things in mind. One was, will we survive? As a big question mark, which as I said, has only been answered after 30 years, I'm sure we will survive now. and the other one was, we have to be international in order to survive.

20:16.98

KP

not coming from ah big country like Thailand with Doucet, Oberoi in India, Jingjiang in China. right we We have no home market to look towards.

20:31.50

KP

And so if you want to survive, you have to be international. So those were the only two things we had in mind. We had to be international to survive and we must survive.

20:43.95

KP

And it sounds very simple, but if you look at the history of boutique hotel chains that originated in Asia from Six Senses with Sonu, good friend, with Adrian, a good friend, with Alila, Aman, Six Senses, you just name them.

21:02.36

KP

They're all gone, man. There none left. And that's quite sobering. It's not something for me to beat my chest on. They've all been acquired by others.

21:13.17

KP

And so our Our performance ambition that we've set out, our goal or mission statement that we've told all our colleagues is to be a trusted and respected, but multinational and multi-branded, but very importantly, independent hospitality player in the world.

21:34.29

KP

And it's very difficult to be independent. Oberoi is probably majority owned now by Reliance. a deuce it you may have just read, unfortunately, because Chanin is a very good friend of mine, this massive family dispute.

21:49.96

KP

um So, you know, where does the story end? We're hardly clear. i'm I'm the first generation. I think the second generation is going to do well, but but there's no assurance of survival in this world.

22:06.82

KP

So to me, as somebody once said, 90% of success is simply surviving.

**YOU HAVEN’T DONE SO BAD, FOR BEING A FORMER JAILBIRD**

22:32.99

KP

well, I mean, the the the time spent inspecting the interiors of an incarceration facility has made me realize that even 15 square meter hotel room is quite nice.

23:01.65

KP

Not really. Not really. If you're you're sitting in that cell, you ah I think what it has to have been, definitely not the accommodations. The reason we went into Banyan Tree was because it was a so-called luxury boutique hotel. was a space nobody else wanted to play in.

23:16.02

KP

ah The big boys didn't want to go in there because the fee structure was you know was not attractive enough for them. They wanted to do 300 key hotels. um but But I think the the fact that I backpacked a lot, hitchhiked a lot when I was a teenager, and then I spent time in jail,

23:32.05

KP

I think that probably subconsciously has made me realize that the the freedom of being able to move around everywhere to see the beauty of the world is a very cherished thing.

23:43.62

KP

And I definitely believe, as some people have said, that you know Maslow's hierarchy of deeds, right? You need to feed yourself, then you need to find a place to stay, then you need to clothe yourself. There's a hierarchy needs.

23:59.56

KP

In my view, one of the hierarchy of needs, once you've been able to feed yourself, clothe yourself, and so on, is to travel around you, to see the world around you.

24:11.85

KP

And if you are from a tribe, the old days, is to venture beyond your tribe to see other tribes, to see what's on the other side of the hill.

24:23.08

KP

And that fundamental tribal need to see what's on the other side of the hill to see what's outside the forest you are in, to go beyond the boundaries of the waters that seem to surround you if you live on an island.

24:38.49

KP

the The need to explore the world to see what is there is a fundamental need and I think that was increased during incarceration. It was basically because I traveled a lot and I think that need will always be there um by people to see what there is in this world.

24:59.26

KP

And I think that's what is the more noble part of hospitality, not just to make money from travelers, but to actually enable people to enjoy the beauty of the physical world and the beauty of the cultural world that they inhabit.

**YOU TALK ABOUT NOBILITY. IN TECH, WE TALK ABOUT SCALABILITY. IT’S ALSO WHY PEOPLE FEEL BOUTIQUE HOTELS ARE NOT SCALABLE.**

26:40.06

KP

I think there's two issues here. One is you're talking about how when I thought we were ah safe enough to say that we can survive. One is about survival. The other one is about scalability.

26:51.57

KP

i would I would say the irony about scalability is that you either have to be totally scalable or you don't need scalability.

26:51.78

siew hoon

look

27:05.64

KP

So, and I think it's important to make that difference. I think a lot of boutique hotels survive very well in the world. How many hotels do you know of in in Europe, which have been there, maybe only one or two hotels in Switzerland that have existed for the last 300 years, owned by a family, and they were gone existing for the next 300 years, and they don't need to scale.

27:28.75

KP

So if you are in the hotel business, it is possible not to scale. But if you happen to be in a business that depends on scalability for sheer survival and then you cannot scale, then you are dead.

27:44.95

KP

So if you are in pure tech, Or if not in pure tech, but you're in, let's say, if you're in an app business, any kind of app needs scalability because the whole basis of an app is that there are millions and millions of people who are using your app because there's not much difference between your app and the other app.

28:07.22

KP

So if you are going to be an OTA and you don't have scale to be among the top three or four OTAs in the world, you die. But if you want to be a boutique hotel owner, not a manager, a manager of boutique hotel, if you want to be a small hotel management company, you die.

28:25.64

KP

You have to scale up. But if you want to own two or three hotels, that's fine. i Like a restaurant or something. So I think we must make that differentiation. Now, so that's on the issue of scalability.

28:38.06

KP

I think when I say we've crossed... the the river and we can survive. It's not just about scale. We definitely do have more scalability now, but we don't have the scalability of a tech company.

28:50.51

KP

We have diversification. We've now built a pyramid of brands so that we're not only about a boutique, super luxury hotel. We run the whole the whole pyramid now from mid-scale, upscale, upper upscale, all the way to ultra luxe.

29:06.85

KP

and therefore we now have the financial strength we have the diversification we have got the balance sheet which is important we have sufficient ah depth of management resources we have a whole list of things which when i look at it now i would say we definitely can grow from here.

**FAMILY BUSINESSES ARE FRAUGHT WITH DIFFICULTIES OF SUCCESSION. HOW ARE YOU THINKING ABOUT IT?**

**Subtitle: Daughter Renyung is Deputy CEO**

29:58.96

KP

She's only 40. We have a CEO whom I've worked with for 20 years who is only 60, and he'll definitely be there until he retires at maybe 65 or beyond. I've got a youngest son who was a lawyer who's entered the business.

30:13.11

KP

He's leaving to go and do an MBA, but he'll come back. I've got an elder son who's in our other family business, but who has a hand in banyan tree. um How do I handle succession?

30:24.90

KP

I think one of the major things I have learned, and i was just discussing this with some friends just just recently, was how how, and this is an important insight, I think, and that is that if a successor generation fails, it's largely because of the fault of the parents themselves.

30:51.65

KP

I said that if if a succeeding if a succeeding, if a successor generation fails, the main reason is actually the fault of the parents, not the fault of that succeeding generation itself.

31:12.11

KP

um And I think that you find that born out everywhere. you You see that out, you see that politically within the Lee family. You see that with a lot of family, other other family businesses.

31:24.17

KP

And I think the main point is, successor generations will always have their intrinsic tensions. And most of the time, these tensions are covered up during the parents' generation.

31:41.64

KP

and they have no chance to to surface and be resolved in the parents or the patriarch. is still alive because of the sick that everybody is you know half pretending that everything is hunky dory and the father is still there, the parents are still there.

31:59.09

KP

So you've got this these simmering tensions which are never brought forward and then the parents die, the founding generation dies and then the next one takes over and for a few years things are fine but when a crisis hits they don't know how to deal with it and they start breaking apart.

32:14.34

KP

So my simple answer to you is I don't worry about the independent, the individual capabilities of my children. I think they are quite good and they've learned enough that whatever they don't know, they can find people who know much better than them I think the one thing I've learned is that even while I'm still alive, I need to have them interact with each other substantially without my presence.

32:40.60

KP

so that they've really started to learn how to deal with potential tensions that they may have at a time when I'm still alive so that we can discuss some of these tensions, I can watch some of these tensions, and I can help them ease into a situation where when I'm no longer around, they're actually already quite adept at dealing with inevitable tensions, rather than believe romantically that because they were all siblings, all happy with each other during their parents, tensions should not be there.

33:14.41

KP

And therefore, when these tensions arise, they don't know how to deal with it because their parents are no longer there. So That is one of my most important insights for which I'm trying to do my best now, that they really have time to discuss how they want to manage the business, how they see the future of the company, how they have different views and so on and so forth.

33:36.14

KP

All this in anticipation that they will have to deal with these issues later on. And it's knowing how to deal with these issues that is in fact more difficult than dealing with the issue of or COVID,

33:48.92

KP

dealing with issue of and any kind of external crisis, which is actually not that difficult to deal with because you've learned it from others, your colleagues tell you about it. So dealing with external crisis isn't that big a deal.

34:04.58

KP

Dealing with own family tensions is a much bigger deal for which you've learned never learned anything in business school.

**THE END OF PAX AMERICANA: BACK TO THE FUTURE – 200 YEARS AGO**

34:30.65

KP

I wouldn't necessarily call it i wouldn't call an Asian century. I have said just recently on CNBC that I think in one sentence what what's happening now is the clear endgame of Pax Americana and the beginning of the era of Fortress Americana, meaning the American empire is gone.

34:55.59

KP

It wasn't a very long empire. It was for many years a benevolent and a good empire. It benefited many people in the world. And maybe the empire you could actually say was not very long lasting. It only started probably after World War II when the UK no longer... The World War II was the end of the British Empire for sure.

35:15.26

KP

And so it was from 1945 to now, it was only 80 years. That was the beginning. That's i wouldn't call it an empire. it was actually more American hegemony. Pax Americana would be a good word for it, peace Americana. They maintain the peace around the world.

35:30.37

KP

But you can see simply in what the Americans think about Ukraine and and Europe, that clearly they no longer have an interest to be ah The he hegemon.

35:41.14

KP

And now I think the world is definitely going to be returning back to the future. you remember that old movie, Back to the Future, I've used that term as being what I think the future will be.

35:53.34

KP

We're going back to the future. And the future is going to be what the world was like before Western colonialism, which only started about 200 years ago. But if you go beyond 200 years ago, it wasn't the Western world ruling the world.

36:08.77

KP

It wasn't China ruling the world. It was China having its own space in East Asia and its own vassal states around Southeast Asia. It was Europe, it was the Americas, and it was, you know, maybe it's Islamic world.

36:23.15

KP

You had different civilizations all competing and co-equal under the sun. That was what the world was like for hundreds of years before the Western civilization became dominant, for very good reasons. I'm not bitter against it and so on, but it was the fact.

36:40.16

KP

um I think we're definitely going back to a world where Western civilization, and I use the word civilization, not the superpowers, but Western values about society, about families, about democracy and governance.

36:53.82

KP

ah Western values and civilization is no longer going to be the only model. But it does not mean, on the other hand, a zero-sum game that you're having an Asian century and that American or Western century is down.

37:09.47

KP

I think you're going to definitely see the rise of an Asian civilization, but it doesn't mean they're going to be dominant either. It's going to be co-equal civilizations.

37:20.09

KP

and i And I finally said, I think that they will come When hopefully, maybe not in my lifetime, if I were a young Muslim person today, educated and forward-thinking, I would hope that within the next 100 years, there'll be an Islamic Renaissance and Islamic civilization will return to the heights of where it used to be.

37:44.63

KP

um several centuries ago when Islam was at the height of tolerance, of scientific thinking, of creative literature and art and so on, which it has not been for a long time.

37:55.96

KP

So to that same extent, if we take a historic view of it, you know, Chinese civilization, Eastern civilization with all the values have been definitely pushed in the back for a long time. And now we're recognizing that these values, and not just the economy, not just the military, But the entire civilization that Confucianism and East Asia has stood for is definitely a challenge to the West.

38:19.65

KP

And it will stand its own against the West. It's not going dominate the West. not going to have China invading America. You're not going to have a whole bunch of rice-eating Confucianists running over America.

38:30.65

KP

But the day when we think that America and the West is the the pinnacle of what we should aspire to be, that's long gone. And I think the earlier Asians recognized that, the sooner they will no longer pander to a lot of the very, very warped analysis of the world coming from the West, which is either, oh the West is dying, it's dying.

39:00.76

KP

terminal decline or Asia is now i'm going to conquer the rest of us. All these slant-eyed guys are going to fight a war against America. And as this crazy military commander in the West said, in America said, be prepared because China's missile capability is now going to hit Long Beach, California.

39:20.80

KP

i mean, I just don't even know what to say about people like that.

**THE FUTURE IS ALSO AI: IMPACT ON SOUTH-EAST ASIA TRAVEL WILL BE BIGGER THAN THAT OF BUDGET CARRIERS**

05:02.22

KP

And i I don't mean automation as resulting of AI. I've always said that one of the most under looked impacts that I think particularly for Asia is going to be the impact of ai on simultaneous translation, which Google is already coming up with.

05:22.56

KP

Because if you look at Southeast Asia in particular, um the linguistic differences in Southeast Asia is far more fragmented than that in Europe. Clearly not in China, India also not that much, and certainly in South America it's all Hispanic, in North America it's all English. In Europe, although there's a multitude of languages, it's all everybody is conversing in English, even young people.

05:50.31

KP

But in Southeast Asia, there's a whole tower of babble in terms of languages and culture. But that is going to change so rapidly in a way that I don't think people can expect. When you can speak in Tagalog and somebody in Thailand can understand you and you know vice versa and so on, that is going to make travel within Southeast Asia become so amazing.

06:15.48

KP

And I think that will have a far deeper impact on hospitality within Southeast Asia than what one typically thinks about technology's impact on hospitality, meaning no automation and this and that and so

06:37.89

KP

on. When you really think of it within you know the ASEAN population is the same as Europe. But you can imagine if you travel within ASEAN, except for the elites who all speak English, the barriers are still quite considerable linguistically.

06:52.40

KP

But when that barrier breaks in a very, very physical and very tangible manner, I think that will prompt travel within Southeast Asia and Southeast Asian traveling outside of Southeast Asia.

07:07.89

KP

I think that impact will be even more than the advent of our budget carriers, which had a huge impact.

**WHAT ABOUT AI’S IMPACT ON JOBS IN COUNTRIES LIKE THE PHILIPPINES?**

07:58.10

KP

Well, I've always said technology is an enabler, either of good or bad. So if you happen to be in an economy which is gearing itself up to be more technically progressive and labor is more scarce and employment is good,

08:15.63

KP

then the the advent of ai in terms of labor reduction is going to be definitely a very good impact. If, however, you're in an economy such as in the Philippines, which is labor surplus, and they're not really doing much to be able to increase employment,

08:36.31

KP

then, i mean, the economy is problematic anyway. So no doubt technology of any kind is going to aggravate problems in already, um i guess, problematic economies.

08:51.69

KP

So I would certainly worry if I were in Philippines in terms of labor displacing AI. But I would worry in the Philippines today anyway for many, many other reasons. A country that has no choice but to send its most educated people overseas to be cheap workers is not an economy that is in good shape by any means.

09:15.75

KP

So if you're fundamentally problematic, you're going to be made even more fun, more problematic by AI, for sure.

**TECH HAS ALSO CHANGED WORK: “I AM A DIGITAL COMMUTER”**

00:34.86

KP

So now we spend, I would say probably we would consider Singapore and Phuket to be homes. Then I also commute to Bangkok and then now to Japan even because we have a lot of projects there and I have a home there. So between these four places, the time zone is pretty close and I have four sets of Uniqlo codes everywhere.

00:58.15

KP

So I guess I would say I shuttle between these four places.

01:07.25

KP

Yeah, actually, because I've got a pretty good setup in each of these four places, meaning I've got this big, um big monitor screen that I didn't really know was for gaming because it's curved.

01:20.47

KP

But it's nice for me because I do a lot of looking at drawings and plans and so on. And um so, yeah, i don't I don't work out of office anymore. I work out of home and meeting places. i mean, I have lots of meetings where go physically if I need to or our project sites. But because of the nature of our business also being quite international and our executives all being sort of deployed globally, I do more Zoom meetings than I need to go to an office.

02:10.47

KP

I think it's not just me. I think it's a natural evolution of all international companies, several things happening. First of all, the technology of Zoom and other similar, you know, remote um communication devices, which are very, very close contact and the improvement of it in many other areas where you can look at drawings, you can change drawings, you can actually interact very well.

02:37.24

KP

That's only happened, become really popularized during COVID. That's number one. And number two, I suppose, would be also largely prompted by COVID, but it was a natural thing happening anyway, is that a lot of companies now have decentralized headquarters.

02:55.09

KP

they don't have one big headquarters in one place. So for example, we have technically a corporate headquarters in Singapore, but because we have a Singapore listed company, but we also have another two companies listed in Bangkok.

03:11.01

KP

We have a bulk of our operations in Phuket. We have large operations in China. have We have corporate headquarters in Mexico. and so because of that, we operate out of 25 countries.

03:24.24

KP

but umm it's It's natural now what I do. So I think it's a confluence of a lot of factors. I wouldn't call myself a digital nomad to the extent that I would call myself a digital commuter because a digital nomad actually has more freedom than me. They really go around many other places that they want to go to.

03:44.40

KP

And I'm sort of not that nomadic. I'm just a commuter between different places.

WHAT WILL THE ANTELOPE EVOLVE INTO THE NEXT 30? “CLIMATE ADAPTATION, NOT MITIGATION”

41:25.62

KP

Well, i I hope it won't be a giraffe with the body of a zebra and the tail of a mule. um I hope it won't be an animal concocted by a committee.

41:40.99

KP

um That's the danger that you don't evolve naturally um and you just become a pastiche of things put together that has not but withstood the natural evolution.

41:59.22

KP

Okay. So in in that sense, I wouldn't want to say the specific animal, why it would be I mean, you're not going to evolve from an antelope to a to a unicorn or to a dragon. And so so it's a bit meaningless to sort of use these analogies.

42:19.17

KP

I would simply say that, of course, we want to be something relatively fast, nimble, and it's not a bad example to use, but I mean, I could easily say a gazelle or I could say anything else.

42:30.50

KP

I'm not sure I want to be a rhinoceros or a hippo, but but, you know, people use things like lions and all that. So that's just playing around with

42:39.46

KP

images. But what I think I'm more concerned about is that the animal that we want to be would continue to evolve with time.

42:51.54

KP

um Like even now, we're taking as a small aside, I've basically concluded and and my all my colleagues agree that we're no longer talking about climate mitigation.

43:05.22

KP

We are talking about climate adaptation. So for example, in Phuket, we are preparing for a time when we will absolutely have no water from the government. We're preparing a time when we will have to generate our own electricity.

43:19.47

KP

So I'm looking at climate change as being so clear it's going, but no longer are you mitigating it. You have to adapt to severe heat, severe water shortage and all this sort of stuff.

43:31.56

KP

So in that sense, my whole worldview is informed by my sense that we have to evolve um and and we need to be aware of the threats as well as the opportunities. That's what evolution is all about.

43:47.53

KP

So that's the kind of animal I would want, not one concocted by a committee which or a dinosaur that thinks it's so powerful and fails to to adapt to the times.

**AND YOUR FAVOURITE HOTEL?**

46:10.44

KP

Yeah, the next one.

**DAVID BOWIE SAID, IT TAKES 20 YEARS TO BE AN OVERNIGHT SUCCESS. WHAT DO YOU SAY TO THAT?**

46:36.89

KP

Well, it's taken us 30 years, but we're not David Bowie. We're not an overnight success. we haven't We haven't had our Glastonbury event, our Newport Festival breakthrough where the world writes about us.

46:49.99

KP

We're not rock stars. So I think I would put it a bit more humbly, not that it takes 30 years to be an overnight success. I think it takes you 30 years to know that you're not going to die.

47:02.67

KP

that we are were here to stay. We might be the, you know, we may always be the band that's playing the warm up to an overnight success. I don't know.

47:13.71

KP

But I guess my my point is, it's dangerous to say, even if it takes you 20 years to be the overnight success, because then you're yearning for something which when it comes might pass quickly and then you'll be disappointed.

47:28.30

KP

I've always said that we want to always be there, respected, trusted, but not necessarily a big hit.