**Country:** Singapore

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**Position Paper**

***Topic I- The Role of Infrastructure in the Development of South East Asia***

The Asian market is in great demand for improved infrastructure. It is estimated that the South East Asia region will be spending $8 million USD over the next 15 years upgrading, existing, and implementing new infrastructures. Based on current trends, the money will be mostly focused on transportation and the distribution of both consumer goods and raw materials. Improved Infrastructure will provide many benefits to the region.

Compared to the rest of the world, Asia’s infrastructure is lagging behind. Insufficient policies that fail to link different modes of transport and networks together causes many challenges in transportation, such as the large gap between coastline countries and landlocked countries.

In addition to creating new infrastructure projects, it could be more efficient to develop/enhance pre-existing regional and sub-regional infrastructure projects. In Singapore, a significant initiative is the development of a rail link that will connect the country to Malaysia’s capital: Kuala Lumpur. The nation is also pushing for an expansion of its public transport capabilities and revamping some of its airports.

A major factor that effects infrastructure projects, is the financial possibilities. The primary source of funding for infrastructure in Asia comes from government financing. Problems with this are; prolonged incubation periods, political intervention, and strict regulatory requirements.

In order to satisfy Asia’s demand for infrastructure there are certain challenges that need addressing such as; informal institutional arrangements, the necessity of preparation, limited capacity, and environmental concerns.

The country of Singapore has in the past made many investments in infrastructure projects for transportation. The country has a network of 3,122 kilometers of highways, 99% of which are fully paved. Unfortunately, as a result of this network, there was a steep increase in private car ownership, which led to traffic congestion and an increase in air pollution. Luckily the government responded quickly, and invested heavily in public transport, especially the mass transit system. They also restricted private car usage on Singaporean roads, using measures such as taxes. By the 1990s, 83km of mass rapid transit system, and 11 km of light rapid transit system had been built, which was praised for its safety and quality of service. In 1998, the government launched a $1.7 billion project to build a new transit line.

Another infrastructure project that the Singapore government has invested in, is the development of aviation. The Civil Aviation Authority of Singapore (CAAS) is responsible for developments in this sector. In 1999, there were 9 airports and since then, the government has planned to make an investment of $1.5 billion in upgrading the airport facilities in the first decade of the 21st century.

The abundance of transportation networks in Singapore, allows a greater access and connection to the entire country. It also seems that the government of Singapore is very active in trying to meet the growing infrastructure demands, as they have invested significant sums of money into this area, and it seems that the government is rather effective in solving challenges that these infrastructure projects may cause.

Singapore is an appealing market for infrastructure investments due to excellent government planning, a favorable business framework, and low risks. In the future, the government of Singapore plans to extend the nation’s mass transit system, build new airport terminals and relocate its main port. However, opportunities for investment are limited compared to other developing economies of Asia, due to existing high-quality infrastructure in place and the limitations on government funding. The Singaporean government needs to develop a system to evaluate and narrow down the number of infrastructure projects, so they can spend their limited funding wisely, and reduces the number of unnecessary projects that can get in the way. Another idea is to search for other sources of funding for example; private organizations, companies, etc.

***Topic II- Future of Food***

The future of food is a growing concern all over the world. By 2050, the world population is expected to increase by 2 billion. To accommodate this increased population, agricultural production must increase by 60% to meet the greater demand and provide a basis for economic growth and poverty reduction. Focusing on Asia and the Pacific: solutions on solving food insecurity needs to be discussed in order for the survival of the region. The biggest challenges that are causing food insecurity in Asia and the Pacific are economic and social access to food and climate change. Currently the region is focusing on trying to combat food security by developing climate smart agriculture (CSA).

By solving this issue, the economy and the quality of life of the nation will increase exponentially, by increasing poverty alleviation, education, gender equality, energy use, economic growth and employment, and ecosystem management. Addressing this issue will make a significant difference, especially since the Asia and the Pacific region is made up of about 74% of the world’s 570 million farms. The idea is that an increase in agricultural productivity between 2016 and 2030, could lift an additional 110 million people from poverty. Greater agricultural productivity would also generate additional income to be used for non-tradable and tradable goods and contribute to lower food prices, and increase food security.

Singapore has faced many challenges in combating this issue. The crowded, barren island has almost no natural resources, so the country has always had to be innovated in order to survive. Singapore’s new Smart Nation program has the potential to become the world’s first smart country. In January 2016, the Prime Minister announced an increase of 18% in research funding totaling to $12.96 billion USD over five years, for topics such as urban solutions and sustainability. The main challenge Singapore needs to prioritize is how to make the most of its limited resources and avoid crowding to the already crowded island. This would involve investment in smart infrastructure and engaging citizens.

Compared to the rest of the world, Singapore ranks as the second-most food secure country in the world. The ranking is based on affordability, availability, and quality and safety. This success largely is dependent on its food imports. Singapore imports almost 90% of its food, and less than 1% of its land area is used for agriculture.

Singapore needs to be less reliant on its imports, as many of the country’s major trading partners are experiencing a decrease in their economy due to the food crisis. While the government seems to be trying to implement strategies to increase agriculture in the limited space of the island, new ideas are going to be needed.

***Topic III- Labour Migration & Illegal Trafficking in the Asia-Pacific***

The Asia- Pacific region hosts one of the fastest-growing labour migration flows in the world. Labour migration is popular in the region because it can bring many favourable social and economic impacts. A main force that is increasing labour migration is the economic advantages of migrating, the lack of domestic job opportunities, and less restrictions on obtaining visas and crossing the border. Some immigrants from poorer countries may choose to migrate to a higher-income country such as Singapore for the economic advantages. Also as more women begin to enter the workplace, the demand for more domestic workers are needed. In Singapore, 1 out of every 5 households employs domestic workers. However, serious issues with labour migration have arisen such as, stigmatization around labour migration, inadequate protection for migrants leading to human rights violations and abuses, restrictive migrant policies in host countries, irregular and undocumented migration, Illegal recruitment, excessive placement fees, and human trafficking.

The influx of immigrants entering Singapore is set to continue, even as emigration accelerates and the decline in fertility rates. Attracting skilled foreigners to live, work, and settle, will likely remain a priority for the country since Singapore’s main economic strategy is based on having a highly skilled workforce. The nation’s government has been working hard to maintain the balance of the already multicultural nation. Singaporeans were encouraged to welcome immigrants and to accept the “discomfort” of having more foreigners around. While not expected to relinquish their cultures and languages, immigrants have been urged to participate in local events so that they can learn more about the traditions of Singapore. However, social integration has proven a challenge. With criminal activity rising, including several high profile murders in 2011, foreigners have been blamed for the decline of public safety in Singapore. Another challenge is the belief that immigrants compete with Singaporeans for jobs. People in the country believe that the labour market is giving preferential treatment to immigrants, because they can pay them less, and they are harder workers than Singaporeans. However, Singapore strives in promoting the protection of the rights of unskilled and low-skilled foreign workers.

In terms of policies, a main issue Singapore needs to focus on is the need to recognize dual citizenship as it will allow immigrants and foreign students to gain the same rights as Singaporeans and will hopefully diminish the stigma surrounding immigrants. Singapore also hopes to achieve a way to increase the number of high skilled immigrants, without increasing the overall population too greatly. Lastly, Singapore hopes to develop ways to increase social inclusion, which may help to decrease the hate between Singaporeans and immigrants.

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