

SOUTH ASIA CONFERENCE FOSTERS A VISION OF UNITY FOR THE REGION



Enthusiasm and hope for new levels of collaboration and unity in the region were on the minds of alumni who gathered for the EWC South Asia Regional Conference held in mid-November. In anticipation of strengthening their regional network, more than 150 alumni from 10 countries (Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, the United States, Indonesia, Thailand, and the Philippines) joined EWC officers and staff in New Delhi for the conference.

To build this interconnected community, EWC President Charles E. Morrison told the gathered alumni that “international cooperation is absolutely essential to the effective management and eventual solution of the issues of our time.” Tarun Das, chief mentor for the Confederation of Indian Industry and member of the EWC Board of Governors, added in his keynote address that “leadership needs to be grasped by civil society — cutting across protocol, red tape, [and] bureaucracy — to build friendship, partnership and a new community of peace and prosperity.”

Robert Blake, Deputy Chief of Mission at the U.S. Embassy in New Delhi, also spoke at the conference’s opening session. He told the delegates, “Partnerships are



Noora Michaels, EWC conference assistant, presents a lei and a certificate of appreciation to Pemanda Belliappa, EWCA Chennai Chapter president.



Gordon Ring, EWC alumni officer, addresses the conference participants.



(l to r) Mohammad Ibrahim, EWCA chapter coordinator for South Asia; Tarun Das, member of the EWC Board of Governors; Robert Blake, Deputy Chief of Mission, U.S. Embassy, New Delhi; and Mala Shankardass, New Delhi Chapter president conduct the opening ceremony.

not and cannot be just between governments.... Engagement by people is what will propel and sustain the formal ties of government.”

President Morrison commented on the significance of the EWC alumni network, “There is something much, much more to the East-West Center alumni network than a society of friends and professional colleagues. There is the commitment not so much to an organization, as to an idea and mission — the East-West Center mission of a vibrant, peaceful, prosperous, and just Asia Pacific community as a key building block of the global society of the future.”

In 2005, former EWCA President Dan Berman served as President Morrison’s Special Representative to South



Arfa Zehra, EWCA Lahore Chapter leader, presents a gift from the alumni to EWC President Charles E. Morrison.

During the conference, a Chapter Leaders Workshop, supported by a \$24,000 State Department grant, drew 15 current and prospective chapter leaders together to consult on ways to stimulate alumni collaboration and service in the region. Initial project proposals included the establishment of a children's library; a student exchange program between India and Pakistan for young artists; and a nutritional enrichment initiative for street children in Nepal. Enthusiastic discussion led to plans for the next South Asian Regional Conference tentatively scheduled for 2007 in Lahore, Pakistan.

The participants left the conference with a vision for a new unified South Asia, a personal desire to actively serve, and a conviction for positive change. Das urged the delegates to "go beyond the status quo...strive...struggle...move ahead...[and] change the future."

Asia. Throughout the year, he traveled across Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka, establishing new partnerships, mobilizing fledgling chapters, and assisting the formation of new chapters.

"The [East-West] Center has long shown that when people from different societies come together to study, train, and conduct research they not only gain professionally and personally, but they contribute to a more peaceful, stable, and tolerant global community."

ROBERT BLAKE
Deputy Chief of Mission,
U.S. Embassy, New Delhi

The East-West Center Association (EWCA) has 10 alumni chapters in South Asia, part of a global network of over 50,000 professionals who have participated in the Center's programs. Many members of the South Asian chapters occupy key positions in government, business, journalism, and education. The conference provided an important venue for participants to network and build bridges across the region's diverse cultures, tying the bonds of EWC alumni even tighter.



Naveen S. Garewal, EWCA Chandigarh Chapter leader (left) and EWC alumnus Gembo Dorji of Thimpu, Bhutan share new insights from the conference.



EWC alumnus Michael Anderson, public affairs officer at the U.S. Embassy in New Delhi (left), and Dan Berman, EWC president's special representative to South Asia.