

SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA TRAVELS TO SINGAPORE, MALAYSIA AND HONG KONG

Beginning on Nov. 22, SGI President Ikeda visited three Asian countries, meeting government officials, academics and many SGI members, sharing with all his dreams for the fast-approaching 21st century.

SGI leader meets with Singapore president.

On Nov. 22, SGI President Ikeda arrived in Singapore, his third visit, and first in five years. The day following his arrival, Nov. 23, the SGI leader paid a courtesy call on Singapore's President S. R. Nathan at the Istana, the president's official residence. Also present at the 30-minute meeting were the First Lady, Mrs. S. R. Nathan, and the SGI leader's wife, Mrs. Kaneko Ikeda. At the outset of the meeting, Mr. Ikeda declared that he was delighted to meet with "the people's president." President Nathan humbly demurred, saying that the people would decide whether he was deserving of such a title after he had completed his term of office. The SGI leader praised Mr. Nathan's commitment to the belief that "every Singaporean matters" and his consistent efforts in the sphere of enhancing social welfare and the protection of workers.

The SGI leader commented on a speech Mr. Nathan made in September this year at the launch of President Challenge 2000—the president's personal call to the people of Singapore to develop a stronger spirit of community caring and volunteerism. The Singaporean president had said: "One measure of how far we have progressed and matured as a nation will be the level of our sense of social responsibility. How sensitive are we to the needs of the less fortunate? How prepared are we to reach out to those in need? These are questions we need to ask ourselves as we reflect on our past, and as we look to build our future together."

President Ikeda noted that, as a person who has experienced hardship and struggle firsthand, Mr. Nathan shows a genuine desire to see those in difficult situations achieve happiness and success. The SGI leader said he was moved by the way the president has transformed all his own hardships into compassion and affection for his fellow citizens.

University of Sydney confers honorary doctorate.

At a special graduation ceremony conducted here on the morning of Nov. 25, for its international students from Singapore and neighboring countries, the University of Sydney, one of Australia's most prestigious institutes of higher education, conferred an honorary degree of Doctor of Letters on SGI President Ikeda. The award was made in recognition of the SGI leader's activities as a global citizen, his promotion of international dialogue transcending religious, philosophical and national boundaries, and his contributions to finding solutions to the issues and challenges that confront global society.

After the graduation ceremony, President Ikeda met with Chancellor Kramer and other members of the University of Sydney. The SGI leader told the chancellor that he would never forget the warm way in which she had interacted with each of the students at the graduation ceremony, and said he keenly sensed her genuine concern for and interest in their future. Chancellor Kramer thanked President Ikeda for his remarks at the ceremony, particularly his comments about the University of Sydney, and asked if she might have a

copy of his speech in order to share it with other people at the university. In addition to reiterating his deep appreciation for the honorary doctorate, Mr. Ikeda said he was gratified to see the meaningful exchange being conducted between the Toda Institute for Global Peace and Policy Research, of which he is the founder, and Sydney University's Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies.

Chancellor Kramer said that the credit for the exchange between the two institutes goes to Dr. Rees, adding that it was he who first introduced her to President Ikeda's achievements as a scholar and also his practical efforts to promote peace and to help people around the world. Expressing his humble appreciation, Mr. Ikeda voiced the hope that further exchange could also be developed between the Australian university and Soka University in the future. Chancellor Kramer stated the opinion that such exchange would be very beneficial and meaningful for both schools. Dr. Kinnear concurred, saying that the University of Sydney looks forward to strengthening its ties with Soka University, building on the foundation that has already been laid. The SGI leader said: "It is important to learn from the cultures of other countries. And, in that regard, it is necessary for people of different countries to transcend national borders and work together on all levels for the sake of education. Otherwise we cannot hope to foster broadminded world citizens." He also remarked that a distorted, closed and narrow education lay at the root of Japan's waging war and invading other nations before and during World War II, and that this must never be allowed to be repeated.

Malaysian University awards honorary doctorate.

SGI President Ikeda arrived in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, on Nov. 27, following the successful completion of his itinerary in Singapore. This is his second visit to the Southeast Asian country, and first in 12 years.

The Universiti Putra Malaysia, Malaysia's largest university, conferred an honorary degree of Doctor of Letters on the SGI leader. A special convocation ceremony was held in President Ikeda's honor at the school's Sultan Salahuddin Abdul Aziz Shah Cultural and Art Center. Presiding over the ceremony were University Chancellor Tun Haji Hamdan bin Sheikh Tahir, Pro-Chancellor Tan Sri Hashim bin Aman and Vice-Chancellor Tan Sri Syed Jalaludin bin Syed Salim. Some 600 people attended the event, including Universiti Putra Malaysia faculty and students, as well as representatives of Soka University, SGI and Soka Gakkai Malaysia.

Before the presentation ceremony, President Ikeda met with Universiti Putra Malaysia Chancellor Tun Haji Hamdan. The chancellor, who is also the governor of the state of Penang, or Pulau Pinang, extended an invitation to the SGI leader to visit the state's beautiful Penang Island.

Representatives conference in Malaysia is held.

On Dec. 1, SGI President Ikeda attended a representatives conference with 2,000 SGM members from throughout the country to commemorate 40 years of the movement for worldwide kosen-rufu. The meeting took place at the SGM Culture Center, located in the suburbs of Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia's capital city. Also present were Mrs. Kaneko Ikeda, SGI General Director Eiichi Wada, SGM General Director Koe Teng Hong and Women's Division Leader Tan Lian Kim, and other SGI leaders.

At the meeting, President Ikeda delivered a speech in which he called on the SGM members to continue advancing together throughout their lives and build within them a

magnificent “palace of happiness.” A garden party was held on the culture center grounds following the gathering. (The full text of President Ikeda’s speech will appear in an upcoming issue of the *World Tribune*.)

SGM has received high praise for its broad-ranging contributions to society from a number of the country’s top officials, as well as newspapers and television stations, and other areas of Malaysian society. General Director Koe says that the reason for the Malaysian organization’s great success has been the members’ sincere and wholehearted efforts and the tremendous development of the youth.

SGI President talks with Malaysian prime minister.

SGI President Ikeda met with Prime Minister Mahathir bin Mohamad on Nov. 30 for approximately 40 minutes at the Prime Minister’s Office Complex in Putrajaya. Located about 15 miles south of Kuala Lumpur, Putrajaya (formerly known as Perang Besar) is Malaysia’s new administrative capital.

Recalling their discussion 12 years ago about the desirability of holding of a summit conference of Asian leaders, President Ikeda noted that at the recent ASEAN+3 Summit, a gathering of top leaders of the 10 Association of South East Asian Nations joined by China, Japan and South Korea, significant progress had been made toward realizing Dr. Mahathir’s long-standing proposal of holding an East Asian Summit. The SGI leader noted that stability in Asia will serve as a model for the peaceful coexistence of ethnically diverse peoples as well as a foundation for world peace.

President Ikeda commented on the fact that the members of SGM had been privileged to participate in the opening ceremony of the 16th Commonwealth Games, which were held in Kuala Lumpur in September 1998. At the event, which was broadcast worldwide to some 500 million viewers, 5,000 SGM members filled the stands to perform a spectacular card stunt—creating a huge moving screen where a changing panorama of scenes was depicted by colorful flip cards. The SGI leader expressed his appreciation to Dr. Mahathir for singling out SGM’s card stunt for special commendation at a thank-you gathering for those who had participated in the opening ceremony. Mr. Ikeda also thanked the prime minister for later kindly contributing a message for inclusion in a book of photographs published by the SGM organization. In the message, Dr. Mahathir said he took pride in the SGM members’ performance, adding that their unity, selflessness and hard work illustrated the will and strength to overcome any difficulty.

In taking his leave, President Ikeda again urged the prime minister to take care of his health—for the sake of peace, for the people of Malaysia, and for the 21st century.

SGI Hong Kong–Macau Executive Conference convenes.

SGI President Ikeda arrived in Hong Kong on Saturday, Dec. 2, on what is his 20th visit to the region. He attended an SGI Hong Kong–Macau Executive Conference at the SGI-Hong Kong Grand Culture Center. In his speech at the gathering, the SGI leader explained that Buddhism is the earth upon which culture and peace flourish, and commended the efforts of the Hong Kong and Macau members, who are widely spreading the philosophy of humanism in their respective communities. (The full text of President Ikeda’s speech will appear in an upcoming issue of the *World Tribune*.)

SGI president meets with chief secretary of Hong Kong administrative region.

SGI President Ikeda dined this evening at the official residence of Mrs. Anson Chan, Chief Secretary for Administration of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region

(HKSAR). During the three-hour visit, the SGI leader and Mrs. Chan, who is Hong Kong's second highest-ranking official next to Chief Executive Tung Chee Hwa, discussed a wide range of subjects, including the future of Hong Kong and of China-Japan friendship.

Mr. Ikeda was accompanied by his wife Kaneko and two sons, and by SGI-Hong Kong General Director Lee Kong Sau. They joined Mrs. Chan's husband Archibald Chan and the couple's son and daughter as well as members of Mrs. Chan's extended family, including four of her brothers and their spouses and her famous mother Fang Zhaoling. Mrs. Fang is a noted Chinese calligrapher and painter whose works are currently being shown in an exhibition at the Tokyo Fuji Art Museum, which Mr. Ikeda founded. Director Leung Saiwah of the Hong Kong Leisure and Cultural Services Department, which offered its assistance in bringing the art exhibition to Japan, also attended the dinner with his wife.

After being warmly welcomed by the chief secretary, the SGI leader exchanged greetings with Mrs. Fang, relaying to her the tremendous success of her exhibition in Tokyo. He told her that people are flocking to see the showing out of their profound admiration and respect for her, her work and the way she has lived her life. "The exhibition has a depth that is quite extraordinary," he said, adding, "Your name is renowned throughout Japan." The artist thanked the SGI leader for his kind words. Mrs. Chan also expressed her appreciation for the wonderful exhibition the Tokyo Fuji Art Museum has created to showcase her mother's works, remarking that the 86-year-old artist has been in even higher spirits since returning from its opening in October. Sharing some of the impressions that viewers of the exhibition have sent in, President Ikeda commented that Mrs. Fang's works vividly reveal her character and inner essence, presenting to viewers a seamless fusion of art and the artist's life.

The SGI leader praised Mrs. Chan for earning the people's love and trust through her leadership during the crucial period before and after Hong Kong's transition to Chinese sovereignty, describing her achievements as history-making. Mrs. Chan responded that she is simply a civil servant and that, having served in the position for so long, it is time for her to hand over her responsibilities to someone younger.

Chinese University of Hong Kong honors SGI president.

On Dec. 7. The Chinese University of Hong Kong conferred an honorary degree of Doctor of Social Science on SGI President Ikeda. The SGI leader was among four distinguished individuals who received honorary degrees from the university at its 56th Congregation for the Conferment of Degrees. Mr. Ikeda is the first Japanese to receive an honorary degree from the Chinese school.

Founded in 1963, the Chinese University of Hong Kong is the first university with which Soka University, founded by President Ikeda, signed an exchange agreement in 1975. It has four colleges and a student body of over 13,000.

When President Ikeda's name was called he rose and stepped forward. Public Orator Professor Andrew Parkin then delivered the citation, introducing the SGI leader's life and achievements—from his humble beginnings to his encounter with his mentor Josei Toda to his wide-ranging activities as SGI president. Professor Parkin said: "Dr. Ikeda devotes himself to the education and nurture of young people, working from a strong base—his inspirational concept of revolution from within oneself—encouraging people to become self-reliant individuals as they advance into the 21st century." He ended with a short poem he had composed: "I have heard men cry, / Hatred's venom on their tongues. / But with his heartfelt / words, Ikeda's poetry / turns us from the paths of blood." Professor Parkin

remarked privately after the ceremony that the more research he did on President Ikeda, the more impressed he became, saying that this had inspired him to write the lines of verse that he had included at the end of the citation.

In the 25 years since signing an exchange agreement in March 1975, the two schools have conducted extensive exchange. To date, a total of some 350 students and teaching staff of the schools have participated in the exchange programs under the reciprocal arrangement. President Ikeda has also taken every opportunity to deepen the ties of friendship with the Hong Kong school, making book presentations and proposing the holding on its campus of the Treasures of Japanese Art Exhibition of the Tokyo Fuji Art Museum, of which he is the founder. Over the past quarter century, the SGI leader has also met and conducted dialogues with each successive vice-chancellor of the Chinese University of Hong Kong.

After the successful conclusion of his itinerary in Hong Kong, President Ikeda and his party returned to Japan on December 8, bringing to a close this most recent overseas trip which also took the SGI leader to Singapore and Malaysia.