

PATTERN FOR PROSPERITY

The need for regional solidarity is more glaring now than it has ever been. The chasm between the developed and the developing nations is widening every day. Many of the countries of this region are falling desperately short of the five per cent annual economic growth rate projected by the United Nations. Compounding this difficulty is the fact that population growth continues undaunted. Each day brings into Asia many new mouths to feed and bodies to clothe, all from what is already a vastly inadequate store-room. This gap must be plugged quickly, lest our ambition fall victim to the traditional sense of fatalistic resignation.

One means of bridging this gap is for the countries of this region to work in concert. While we have to recognize the heterogeneous nature of the region, this does not preclude mutual cooperation. In fact, this diversity can be an invaluable asset. The effects of economic development in any one country are multiplied when complemented by the wisdom and experience of other nations.

The recognition of this urgent need for cooperation is inherent in the Charter of the Asian Development Bank. It is our expressed purpose to serve Asia as a clearing house of common understanding; not only between Asian and non-Asian countries, but within our own region as well.

I believe we are headed in the right direction. The speed with which the ADB grew from a dream to a reality serves notice to the world that the spark of regional cooperation exists. It now befalls the Bank to kindle that spark with the fuel of international insight, until it becomes a raging fire of collective endeavor.

Conditions are better suited to maximizing the effect of regional cooperation today than they have ever been before. The membership of the Asian Development Bank attests to that fact.