



From the Chairman's Desk



We had the pleasure of welcoming Brunei's Employees Trust Fund (ETF) and five new Board Members to the ASSA family at the 7th ASSA Board Meeting held in Kuala Lumpur on 20th April 2001. They are:

- **Brunei**
 - **Tuan Haji Khalid bin Haji Ghazali**
Managing Director, Employees Trust Fund
- **Malaysia**
 - **Mr Azlan Mohd Zainol**
Chief Executive Officer, Employees Provident Fund
- **Philippines**
 - **Attorney Winston F. Garcia**
President and General Manager, Government Service Insurance System
- **Philippines**
 - **Mr Vitaliano N. Nanagas II**
Chairman and President, Social Security System
- **Thailand**
 - **Mr Somchai Wattana**
Secretary General, Social Security Office; Vice Chairman, ASSA

At that meeting, we also thanked the following former Board Members for their invaluable contributions to the formation and development of ASSA:

- **Malaysia**
 - **Tan Sri Sallehuddin**
former Executive Chairman, Employees Provident Fund
- **Philippines**
 - **Mr Federico C. Pascual**
former President and General Manager, Government Service Insurance System
- **Philippines**
 - **Mr Carlos A. Arellano**
former Chairman, President and Chief Executive Officer, Social Security System
- **Thailand**
 - **Mr Rungsarit Chantararat**
former Secretary General, Social Security Office

This issue of ASSA News features a special two-page article introducing ETF, the latest addition to our ASSA family, and a write-up giving brief profiles of the new Board Members. In addition, there is the usual Country News to update us on member institutions' latest happenings.

ASSA has grown and developed over the last few years. Many good suggestions have been made to promote its objective of exchanging experiences and information on social security among members. Some examples include study visits made by Vietnam Social Security (VSS) to Malaysia's Employees Provident Fund (EPF) and from EPF to Singapore's Central Provident Fund Board (CPF). There is also the setting up of the ASSA Website on 25th September 2000 to facilitate easy access of information for members.

Another useful suggestion made during the 7th ASSA Board Meeting was to create a new section in the ASSA Website, which features ASSA member institutions' developments and improvements made to their systems and practices for the purpose of learning and sharing. It was further suggested that the member institution that chairs ASSA could help choose the theme for sharing each year. CPF Board, Singapore, which currently chairs ASSA, has therefore chosen the theme of "Customer Services" to kick-start the new section in the ASSA website.

We have contributed two articles - "CPF Employer Classroom" and "CPF Web-Linkup with Financial Institutions". "CPF Employer Classroom" informs and helps employers' payroll personnel make their CPF monthly contributions for their workers promptly and correctly. "CPF Web-Linkup with Financial Institutions" saves CPF members' time and inconveniences by doing away with the need to write in or make physical trips down to CPF Board to request copies of their statements for their personal transactions with financial institutions. We hope ASSA Members find the articles informative and useful. We would appreciate it if other Members could also share their organisations' customer service practices.

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Flashback of 7th ASSA Board Meeting

Highlights of the 7th ASSA Board Meeting

The 7th ASEAN Social Security Association (ASSA) Board Meeting was held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia on 20th April 2001. Hosted by Malaysia's Employees Provident Fund (EPF), the meeting was attended by 26 delegates from 8 member institutions, as well as observers from Brunei and the International Social Security Association (ISSA).

The Board meeting was preceded by the opening addresses of Mr Azlan Mohd Zainol, Chief Executive Officer of EPF Board, Malaysia, and Mr Lim Han Soon, Chairman of the ASSA Board and General Manager of Central Provident Fund Board. In his opening address, Mr Azlan Mohd Zainol emphasised the importance of developing an effective social protection system. He added that ASSA has fostered better regional cooperation and sharing of experiences among its members. Mr Lim Han Soon in his following address thanked Mr Azlan Mohd Zainol for hosting the Board Meeting and expressed anticipation of a fruitful exchange of ideas on social security.

At the Board meeting, Mr Lim Han Soon welcomed four new Board members and thanked the outgoing Board members for their valuable contribution to ASSA. The Board meeting witnessed the inclusion of Brunei's Employees Trust Fund (ETF) into the ASSA Board. The Honorable Pehin Hussain, the Minister for Culture, Youth and Sports and Chairman of ETF, Brunei, was present to thank the ASSA Board for accepting Brunei as a member institution of ASSA. The meeting also approved the creation of a new section in the ASSA website featuring good practices of member institutions' systems, processes or services for sharing and learning amongst member institutions.



United we stand! ▲



▲ Deep concentration at the ASSA Board Meeting



Admiring the interior of Masjid Putrajaya (Mosque) ▲



▲ Standing tall at the steps of Putrajaya...



▲ Let the dinner procession begin!

Mr Lim Han Soon, Chairman of ASSA, together with Mr Azlan Mohd Zainol and the Honourable Pehin Hussain, leading the Board members to the dining hall.

Warmest Welcome to our new Board Members and Sincerest Thanks to the Outgoing Members

There are some new faces on the ASSA Board!
We are pleased to extend our warmest welcome to the following new Board Members of ASSA.



Thailand

- Mr Somchai Wattana

Secretary General of Thailand's Social Security Office (SSO) and Vice Chairman of ASSA

Mr Somchai Wattana is the Secretary General of Thailand's Social Security Office (SSO). Prior to this, he was the Director-General of the Department of Employment. In 1998, he was the Advisor on Efficiency of SSO.



Brunei

- Tuan Haji Khalid bin Haji Ghazali

Managing Director of Employees Trust Fund (ETF)

With the admission of Brunei's Employees Trust Fund (ETF) [See Page 4-5] into the ASSA Family, Tuan Haji Khalid bin Haji Ghazali has become a new Board Member of ASSA. Tuan Haji Khalid is the Managing Director of ETF, Brunei. He is also the Executive Director of the Islamic Development Bank, Jeddah Saudi Arabia.



Malaysia

- Mr Azlan Mohd Zainol

Chief Executive Officer of Employees Provident Fund (EPF) Board

Mr Azlan Mohd Zainol is the new Chief Executive Officer of EPF Board, Malaysia. He was recently appointed by the Ministry of Finance on April 2001. He was a banker with 22 years of experience in the private sector.



Philippines

- Attorney Winston F. Garcia

President and General Manager of Government Service Insurance System (GSIS)

Attorney Winston F. Garcia is currently the President and General Manager of GSIS, Philippines. He has been a practising lawyer since 1983. Mr Garcia is also the Chairman of the Committee on Good Government, Committee on Laws and Ordinances and Executive Committee on Anti-Graft and Corruption.



Philippines

- Mr Vitaliano N. Nanagas II

Chairman and President of Social Security System (SSS)

Mr Vitaliano N. Nanagas II is the Chairman and President of SSS, Philippines. He is also currently holding a portfolio of jobs such as the Financial and Management Consultant for various Philippine and Multinational Companies.

Our Sincerest Thanks

We would also like to offer our sincerest thanks to the following outgoing Board Members:

- **Malaysia** - **Tan Sri Sallehuddin**
former Executive Chairman of Employees Provident Fund (EPF). He has retired as of 31st January, 2001.
- **Philippines** - **Mr Frederico C. Pascual**
former President and General Manager of Government Service Insurance System (GSIS)
- **Philippines** - **Mr Carlos A. Arellano**
former Chairman, President and Chief Executive Officer of Social Security System (SSS)
- **Thailand** - **Mr Rungsarit Chantararat**
former Secretary General of Social Security Office (SSO)

ETF Is Now Part of

On 20th April 2001, at the 7th ASSA Board Meeting held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, Brunei's **Employees Trust Fund (ETF)** was cordially and unanimously accepted as part of ASSA by the ASSA Board.

The Chairman, Mr Lim Han Soon, on behalf of ASSA, was glad to extend his sincere welcome to ETF. As part of that welcome, he launched a special announcement on the ASSA website showing three interlocking arrows encircling the ASSA Logo and all the national flags of the seven member countries lined up in a circle to welcome ETF as part of ASSA. This announcement acknowledged ETF as part of the ASSA family and signified the forging of closer ties among member institutions.

The following is a special feature to introduce the youngest member institution to the other members of the ASSA family.



At the 7th ASSA Board Meeting held on 20th April 2001, Employees Trust Fund of Brunei was accepted as a Member Institution of the ASEAN Social Security Association.

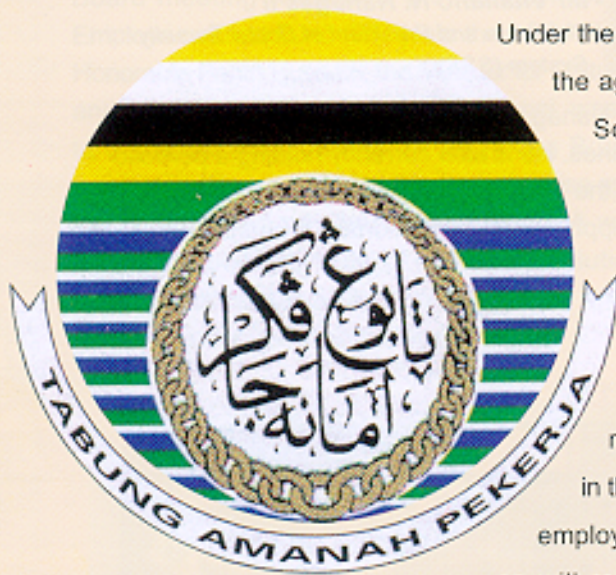
The ASSA Family Has A New Member Employees Trust Fund (ETF)

The Employees Trust Fund (ETF) was launched on 1st January 1993 to provide sufficient savings for workers' retirement. The compulsory defined contributions savings scheme was set up under the Emergency (Tabung Amanah Pekerja) Order, and subsequently enabled a Board known as the Tabung Amanah Pekerja Board to be formed.

Under the Tabung Amanah Pekerja Act, Citizens and Permanent Residents below the age of 55 employed under a contract of service must be included in this Scheme. Thus membership is compulsory for all civil servants in non-pensionable employment as of 1st January 1993, and all private sector employees as of 1st January 1994. However, the following employees are exempted: All security personnel (Police, Armed Forces and Prison Wardens), foreign workers and employees above 55 years of age.

On 1st January 1996, TAP Board specified a sum of B\$80.01 as the minimum monthly wage liable for contribution for a newly employed employee in the private sector. The collection, which is the responsibility of the respective employers, must be made by the 15th day of the following month. Failure to do so will render the employers liable for Service Charge and Dividend Loss.

The current minimum contribution rate is 5% of the employee's monthly wage with a matching 5% contributed by the employer.



The ASSA Family

How the ETF works

Definition of "Wage"

In accordance with Section 2 of Tabung Amanah Pekerja Act, "wage" is defined as the basic salary, and includes all remuneration payable to a worker for work done in respect of his/her employment. This includes overtime and director's salary. However, the following is not included:

- *the value of housing accommodations or the supply of food, fuel, light, water, medical attendance, amenities or services;*
- *contributions paid by the employer on his / her own account to any pension or provident fund;*
- *travelling allowances or the value of any travelling concessions;*
- *gratuity payable on discharge or retirement;*
- *commissions; or*
- *directors' fee*

Benefits for members of ETF

The following are some benefits that members of ETF enjoy:

► Retirement at 55 years of age

Members can withdraw the whole of his savings when they reach 55 years of age.

► Incapacitated

The whole of the savings can be withdrawn in cases where a member is certified to be physically or mentally incapacitated from engaging in any further employment by an approved physician.

► Emigration

The whole savings will be paid to the member emigrating or leaving Brunei Darussalam indefinitely.

► Death

In the event of a member's death, the whole of the deceased's savings will be paid to the Administrator appointed by the Probate Officer.

► Pre-Retirement at the age of 50

A member who has attained the age of 50 years is allowed to withdraw a sum representing one-fourth of the amount standing to the credit of such member at the commencement of the year in which the withdrawal application is authorised.

► Housing 1

A member is allowed to withdraw part of his savings for housing purposes under the following circumstances: the member has

- *been allotted a house;*
- *purchased or built a house;*
- *entered into an arrangement (which in the opinion of the Board is a firm arrangement) to purchase / build a house;*
- *taken a loan made on the security of a charge on the house for its purchase.*

The member is allowed to withdraw a sum not exceeding 20% of the purchase price, or the amount of the loan outstanding at the date of application, provided that the amount withdrawn shall not exceed 45% of the amount standing to the credit of such member.

► Housing 2

A member who has entered into an arrangement to build or purchase a house, is allowed to withdraw from his savings up to:

- *15% of the cost of the house if the value of the house is not more than B\$150,000; or*
- *10% of the cost of the house if the value of the house is above B\$150,000.*

However, this withdrawal allowance is only given to those members with savings of at least B\$40,000 or has become ETF members for more than 10 years.

EPF Introduces Executive Information System (EIS)

The Employees Provident Fund (EPF), Malaysia, is planning to introduce a new information system called the Executive Information System (EIS) to harness the advantages of technology.

This system will enable top management and other managers to obtain fast and accurate information on key performance indicators, as well as reports on trends, variances and exceptions for the purpose of making decisions.

The EIS system is expected to replace the manual system in January 2002.

EPF Enhances Benefits of Four Withdrawal Schemes

Effective 2nd January 2001, members of the EPF, Malaysia are now entitled to extended benefits.

Members' Education Withdrawal Scheme

With this extended provision, members can now withdraw their savings to finance their own studies at diploma and post-graduate degree levels at higher learning institutions in the country and abroad. Previously, members were allowed to withdraw their savings only to finance their children's education.

Housing Withdrawal Scheme

Members are now allowed to withdraw their savings to buy or build a house for the second time, provided they sell their first house that was bought or built with their EPF savings.

Members' Personal Computer Withdrawal Scheme

Under this scheme, EPF members can withdraw their savings of up to a maximum of RM3,500.00 to purchase a personal computer for their children or for their own use. Previously, members were only allowed to withdraw their savings to buy a computer for their children aged 10 and above.

Pensionable Public Sector Employees Scheme

This scheme now entitles public sector employees who have pensionable status to withdraw their savings (employee's share) in the EPF. The employer's share will be returned to the government.

GSIS to Issue Smart ID

Convenience and flexibility are the buzz words in the service industry nowadays. The Government Service Insurance System (GSIS), Philippines, won't be left behind. It will soon issue the GSIS Smart ID to all its members.

The GSIS Smart ID is a membership card with the combined features of an Automated Teller Machine (ATM) card and a built-in e-purse provided by the E-PLDT Visa Cash platform. Members can avail themselves of the benefits and services provided by the GSIS anytime and anywhere through the GSIS Smart ID.

In keeping up with the advances in technology, it may be used as an ATM card, e-card and cash card. Thus, when a member's application for a loan is approved, he can access the ATM machine to pay the proceeds of his loan. Similarly, a GSIS retiree can utilise the powerful network of ATM to obtain his pension via the GSIS Smart ID.

The Smart ID will ensure that all records are updated and all transactions are above-board. As members enroll for the Smart ID, the latest information on the member data records are updated, captured and stored in data bases, paving the way for a new system that will wipe out duplications and data fraud in the future. The finger print biometric feature of the GSIS Smartcard will ensure that the card will be fool-proof. With the built-in e-purse provided by e-PLDT, the Smart ID may be eventually used for retail, mass transport, fastfood, vending, parking, movies, payphones, internet and utility bills transactions.

GSIS Launches Unique Housing Loan Package

The Government Service Insurance System (GSIS) in the Philippines recently launched a unique housing loan package called *Bahay Ko* (My Home) for its members. The uniqueness of the programme lies in a feature not offered by other housing programmes: it comes with a house design and plan inclusive of material cost.

Bahay Ko aims to give the GSIS member the rare opportunity of constructing a house of his own which is guaranteed to be beautiful, durable and suited to his needs.

Eligible members will be made to choose from 12 original house designs grouped according to construction cost.

The design options were adopted from the winning entries in the "You Design, We Build" house design contest especially conducted by the GSIS for the *Bahay Ko* program. The top entries in the contest, which were selected by the cream of the crop in the housing industry, were crafted by a mix of young, creative minds and seasoned architects. In weaving the criteria for the contest, the GSIS made sure that the designs were pleasant, structurally sound, environmentally friendly, responsive to Filipino family traditions, economical and had optimum space utilisation.

Bahay Ko has an appropriation of P6 billion for the year 2001, enough to fund the construction of 25,000 houses for GSIS members whose loans shall be approved on a first-come, first-serve basis.

Under *Bahay Ko*, the loan should be used for constructing a house on a lot owned by the borrower; purchase of a lot and construction of a house therein; or construction of a house on

a lot with outstanding balance. A member can qualify for the programme if he is a permanent government employee and holder of a regular GSIS policy; has not been previously granted a GSIS housing loan; does not have any pending administrative and / or criminal case; has not been a co-maker of an outstanding GSIS housing loan; and has no arrears in his social insurance premiums.

SSS Introduces Flexi-Fund for Overseas Filipino Workers

On 1st May 2001, as its Labour Day offering, the Philippine Social Security System (SSS) announced its new programme for Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) - the Flexi-Fund.

The Flexi-Fund is a voluntary provident fund that will provide a mechanism by which OFWs could save more for the future, complementing the benefits under the regular SSS programs.

The programme's flexibility feature allows members to pay any amount of contribution anytime, and withdraw their contributions, including interest, anytime. Members have the option to receive their benefits in lump sum, pension, or both.

The Fund will be maintained separately from the regular Social Security Fund, and will only invest in government securities.

Social Security System, Philippines:

Study visit on Social Security Policies, Information System and Unemployment Insurance by the Social Security Committee and Advisor, headed by Mr Elawat Chandraprasert, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, Philippines.



SSS Tops Survey Among Government Agencies

The Philippine Social Security System (SSS) has again emerged as the number one government agency in the country in terms of performance and public acceptance, according to the latest nationwide survey.

The survey, conducted by Pulse Asia, showed that the SSS garnered a net approval rating of +54 per cent, the highest among 18 government agencies. 1,200 respondents aged 18 and above participated in the survey.

It was the third time in two years that the SSS topped the list of government agencies. The survey covered issues such as the quality of life and the way the government and its agencies responded to public concerns.

The survey results reflected the people's appreciation of the improvements to SSS benefits and its financial position in the past two years. These include:

- 10 per cent across the board pension hikes in 1999 and 2000;
- increase in funeral benefits from PhP10,000 (US\$197.23) to PhP20,000 (US\$394.48); and
- increase in the maximum amount of salary loans from PhP15,000 (US\$295.86) to PhP24,000 (US\$473.37).

CPF Board Clinches Prestigious People Developer Standard Award



The Central Provident Fund (CPF) Board, Singapore, was recognised in March 2001 for best practices

and quality investment in staff training and development, by the Singapore Productivity & Standards Board (PSB).

The Board was officially conferred the People Developer Standard (PDS) by Dr Joseph Pious, Deputy Director (Workforce Division) of the PSB, in a ceremony on 27th April 2001.

The PDS is Singapore's premier award for organisational achievement in human resource development. So far, only 213 companies have received the prestigious Award. This makes the Board one of the top 213, out of a cumulative 2,200 companies that had applied for the Standard, since its inception four years ago.

At the ceremony, the Board was cited for extensive work carried out to nurture and develop staff. The strong learning culture in the Board, where staff and supervisors used learning contracts to agree on and monitor targets after attending training, came up for special mention.

Learning and sharing through diverse platforms were also recognised as efficient means of communicating course content.

The Board will continue to upgrade its human resource development systems according to global and national movements and perspectives.



SSO Child Allowance Computerised Payment System Developed

Thailand's Social Security Office (SSO) has developed a computerisation system to facilitate its payment for its Child Allowance Scheme.

The Child Allowance Scheme was introduced in December 1998. This scheme provides 150 baht monthly for every child below the age of 6, subject to a maximum of two children per insured person. 1 million children are estimated to benefit from the scheme and this number is increasing continuously. To manage this increase without compromising service quality, a computerisation system to facilitate payment has been developed.

This system automatically processes applications when the relevant data and information are keyed into the on-line system, after required documents from the insured are received. This ensures that the monthly child allowances are disbursed punctually.

An estimated 587 million baht is believed to have been saved annually from the use of this system. Furthermore, an estimated 4.19 million working hours will be saved per year since people need not take leave from work to make their monthly claims.

As at April 2001, the newly computerised system has processed a total number of 699,145 claims.

SSO's Pilot Project of Claiming Benefits via Telephone Receives Positive Feedback from Members

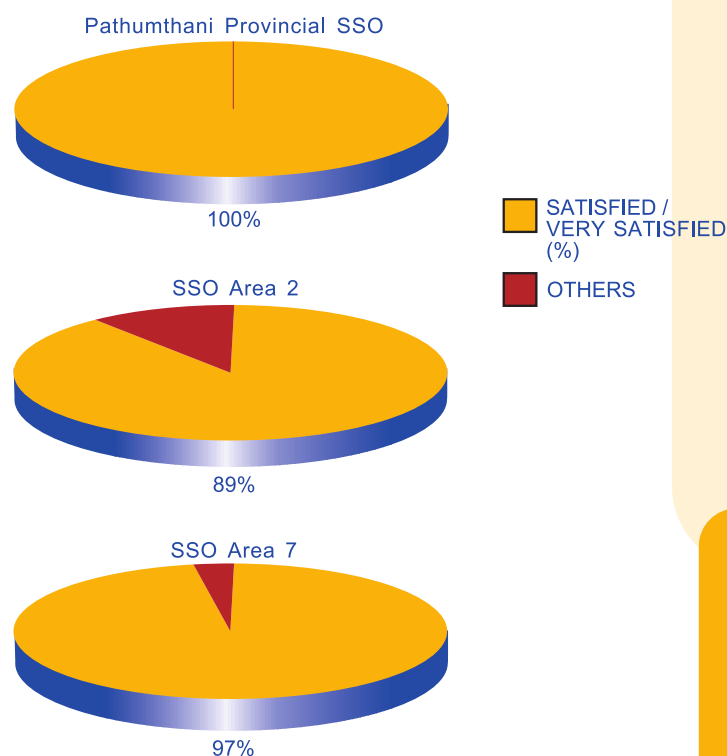
Since August 1999, the Social Security Office (SSO) has launched a pilot project of claiming benefits through the telephone in 5 offices: Pathumthani Provincial SSO, Suphanburi SSO, Nakhon Ratchasima Provincial SSO, SSO area 2 and area 7 in Bangkok.

Surveys conducted between 1st November 2000 - 31st January 2001 found that a large number of users were satisfied with the new service. Users found it convenient as they did not need to travel to the SSO offices. Moreover, users were also very impressed with SSO's staff as they were polite and were able to answer questions clearly.

Some helpful suggestions, such as allowing insured persons to submit pre-printed forms through fax made by members, have thus far been implemented.

Pilot Project of Claiming Benefits via Telephone:

Surveys were conducted between 1st Nov 2000 - 31st January 2001. The number of respondents to the survey varied for different offices. Below are the results of the survey for three offices.



Percentage of Users who are satisfied or very satisfied with the service

This article is contributed by Associate Professor Linda Low who lectures and conducts research at the Department of Business Policy, National University of Singapore. The views are solely the author's.

Introduction

A comparative survey of social security systems in the Anglo-Saxon countries and East Asia is premised on contrasting philosophies and underlying socio-political contexts. The basic question remains: who should take charge of social security and how the burden lies between the individuals and the state.

Anglo-Saxon Systems

Broadly speaking, the three types of social security systems in the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries are:

- *Neoliberal social-driven Scandinavian system, emphasising income maintenance in the 1960s, labour market policies, social service expansion and gender equalisation in the 1970s and 1980s, and "workfare" retraining and lifelong learning with priority for young adults in the 1990s.*
- *Neoliberal market-driven system ranging from curtailed protectionism and social wage in New Zealand and Australia to the American market-oriented supplement in public safety net under negotiated occupational plans.*
- *The liberal European Union (EU) system is in-between the above two, cutting back a generous welfare state and social insurance entitlements but still has a strong social policy.*

All OECD economies have to restructure their tax-financed pay-as-you-go (PAYG) welfare systems because of public sector deficits and rising ratios of debt to gross domestic product (GDP). In addition, there is faster demographic

ageing and consequent rising health and social security protection costs on the demand side. The social insurance is inherently a sound way to pool risks and provide welfare protection but fine-tuning is needed to avoid bankruptcy.

East Asia

East Asia has a hybrid of existing welfare states as in South Korea and China but the culture is generally communitarian. Some East Asian social security systems share the continental European emphasis on familism and aversion to public social services. However, Confucian familism as a compensatory strategy to parallel Christian democratic social policy is unlikely to be effective or sustainable for the same reasons.

Asian embryonic social insurance follows European occupational segmented plans, favouring privileged groups such as civil servants, teachers and the military. However, it is far from being comprehensive or aims to furnish income maintenance. By default more than design, a vacuum of social security spurred the rise of company-sponsored occupational welfare. An example would be Japan.

Paradoxically, while Asian saving is very high, underdevelopment of financial markets and institutions and state intervention preclude the desired economic efficiency which could produce social welfare credibly. As late industrialisers, Asian developing economies are caught in a rough taxonomy of balancing international competitiveness (part of labour and business cost) with social security and welfare protection.

Security Systems

Framework for Comparison

To better understand the various social security provisions, we adopted the World Bank's three pillars of conceptual framework. They are (Table 1):

- *Mandatory publicly managed pillar*
- *Mandatory privately managed pillar*
- *Voluntary pillar*

The PAYG system in Anglo-Saxon welfare states depicts the first pillar while Hong Kong's MPF is an example of the second. Both Malaysia's Employees' Provident Fund (EPF) and Singapore's Central Provident Fund (CPF) are fully-funded mandated private saving but publicly managed. The Anglo-Saxon welfare states are trying to strengthen the third pillar and move the first towards the second. Asian systems have to improve on some aspects of the first pillar as the new economy, together with globalisation and the advancement of information communication technology (ICT), is threatening employability and job security, not just unemployment.

Conclusion and Policy Implications

Some convergence may be emerging in social security systems worldwide to emphasise all three pillars rather than over reliance on one or two. While mandated private saving is best in terms of funding and responsibility for old age security, individuals can be myopic and guidance by the state as provider-of-the last resort is best.

The future retirement system could be a flexible mixture of:

- *PAYG and advance-funding;*
- *Defined-benefit and defined-contribution;*
- *Public and private mix;*
- *Mandatory and voluntary saving;*
- *Saving and earnings as in changing retirement age to work longer.*

The choice of a particular combination will reflect each individual country's circumstances.

TABLE 1: THREE-PILLAR REFORMED OLD AGE INCOME SECURITY SYSTEMS

Characteristics	Mandatory public managed	Mandatory private managed	Voluntary pillar
Objectives	Redistribution and coinsurance	Saving and coinsurance	Saving and coinsurance
Form	Flat, means-tested, minimum pension guarantee	Personal saving, occupational plan	Personal saving, occupational plan
Financing	Tax-financed	Regulated, fully funded	Fully funded

Source: World Bank, (1994), *Averting the Old Age Crisis*. New York: Oxford University Press for the World Bank, p15.

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Status : Board Member

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