

# ASIAN FACTOIDS

## Debunking the Myths

### Myth: Everyone in China speaks the same language.

Truth: Chinese speak many dialects, sometimes making communication difficult. Although the Chinese have shared the same written language for more than 2,000 years, they have often spoken different dialects. Some are as different from each other as Spanish is from French.

Source: *East Asian Connection*, vol. VIII, no. 3, February 1998. Indiana University, Memorial Hall West 207, Bloomington, IN 47405.

## Pillars of Corporate Life

Southeast Asia's ethnic-Chinese communities wield an economic clout disproportionate to their numbers.

In Malaysia, ethnic Chinese make up 29 percent of the population, but control 69 percent of share capital by market capitalization. In the Philippines, the correlation between the two numbers is 2 percent and 50–60 percent. Other Asian countries compare the population of ethnic Chinese to their control of listed firms by market capitalization as follows:

### Ethnic Chinese Population

#### Control of Business: Market Capitalizations

|           | percent of the population | percent control |
|-----------|---------------------------|-----------------|
| Thailand  | 10 %                      | 81%             |
| Singapore | 77 %                      | 81 %            |
| Indonesia | 3.5 %                     | 73 %            |

Source: *Overseas Chinese Business Networks in Asia* by the East Asia Analytical Unit, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Australia, 1995.

## Old People in Asia

The aged as a percentage of population in selected Asian countries (people 60 years or older).

|          | (PROJECTED) |      |      |      |
|----------|-------------|------|------|------|
|          | 1990        | 2000 | 2020 | 2050 |
| S. Korea | 7           | 11   | 20   | 30   |
| China    | 9           | 10   | 16   | 26   |
| Malaysia | 5           | 6    | 10   | 22   |
| India    | 6           | 8    | 10   | 20   |

Source: World Bank.

## Weight of History

For the first time, Japan has more elderly people than it does children under age 15.

|                                 | 1950 | 1960 | 1970 | 1980 | 1985 | 1990 | 1995 | 1997 |
|---------------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Children under 15 (in millions) | 30   | 28   | 25   | 27   | 26   | 22   | 20   | 19   |
| Adults age 65 or over           | 4    | 5    | 7    | 11   | 12   | 15   | 17   | 20   |

Source: Japanese government

## Asian Americans in the U.S.

Asian American leaders are trying to forge a political coalition out of a diverse population.

### Asian ethnic groups in the U.S.

|                  |            |
|------------------|------------|
| Chinese          | 1,654,472  |
| Filipino         | 1,406,770  |
| Japanese         | 847,562    |
| Asian Indian     | 815,447    |
| Korean           | 798,849    |
| Vietnamese       | 617,547    |
| Laotian          | 149,014    |
| Cambodian        | 147,411    |
| Thai             | 91,275     |
| Hmong            | 90,082     |
| Pakistani        | 81,371     |
| Indonesian       | 29,252     |
| All other Asians | 191,586    |
| Total            | 6,920,638* |

\* 1990 census figures. According to the latest government estimates, there are now 10 million Asian Americans.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

## North Korea Political Longevity

Kim Il Sung ruled North Korea almost single-handedly for forty-nine years, from 1945–1994.

Source: *Kim Il Sung: The North Korean Leader* by Dae-Sook Suh (Columbia University Press, 1988).

## Editor's Note:

EAA readers are invited to send material for this column. Please include a source for your "Factoid."

## Garrison State

North Korea, with a population of just 24 million, has one of the world's largest standing armies.

### Active-duty troops (million)

|               |       |
|---------------|-------|
| China         | 2.93  |
| United States | 1.48  |
| Russia        | 1.27  |
| India         | 1.14  |
| N. Korea      | 1.05* |
| S. Korea      | .66   |
| Pakistan      | .59   |
| Vietnam       | .57   |

\*The UN Command, Seoul, estimates North Korean troop strength at 1.2 million.

Source: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1998.

## Golden Oldies

Recession-hit Japanese turn to second-hand goods.

Overall in Japan, the number of second-hand stores increased by 20 percent between 1994 and 1997, according to the Ministry of International Trade and Industry. Sales grew 17 percent, to 91 billion yen, in the same period as consumers looked increasingly to used items such as clothing, video game software and cars. That's more than twice the rate of total retail-sales growth. Sales of second-hand cars also show that the stigma against used goods is easing. More used cars have been sold than new ones for the last five years. Last year, for example, 5.8 million used cars were sold compared with 5.1 million new cars.

Source: *Far Eastern Economic Review*, September 10, 1998, pages 74–5.