



PHILANTHROPY FORUM HIGHLIGHTS ASIAN NEEDS, ROLE OF EDUCATION

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The Credit Suisse Philanthropists Forum 2012 opened today at Raffles Hotel with discussions on the key philanthropic needs in Asia and donor roles.

The two-day forum features 30 leaders and practitioners in the field, as well as around 100 participants.

Deputy Prime Minister Tharman Shanmugaratnam, speaking as the event's guest of honour said philanthropic giving was coming of age in Asia.

Singapore's total giving, for instance, was around 0.6 percent of its GDP, a comparable global average, he said.

However, Mr Tharman, who is also Minister for Finance, emphasised that the growth "was not just in scale but in quality and nature of giving".

There was a broader range of people involved in philanthropy, he said, and donors were more active in their causes.

Mr Tharman also highlighted education and sanitation as the biggest challenges facing the young region.

Both these issues have multiplier effects when addressed, he added, and the private sector, as well as the government and community, had a role to play.

Panelists also reiterated the importance of education in addressing poverty in Asia.

Dr Surin Pitsuwan, secretary-general of ASEAN, and Professor Kishore Mahbubani of NUS' Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy both described philanthropy through education as empowering for its recipients, and having "a civilizing effect".

Added moderator Ambassador-at-large Tommy Koh, "Singapore can help its ASEAN compatriots through education and English".

The forum continues tomorrow.