
The First Asia Pacific Physics Conference in Singapore and the Establishment of the Association of Asia Pacific Physical Societies

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It is my great pleasure to write my memorandum on the first Asia Pacific Physics Conference in Singapore and the establishment of the Association of Asia Pacific Physical Societies (AAPPS).

I was in Stony Brook, New York for several years between 1971 and 1980. I often discussed in Stony Brook with Professor C.N.Yang how to develop not only physics but also more generally science in Asia. Professor Yang told me in 1980 that Dr. K. K. Phua of the National University of Singapore was trying to organize an International Conference on Physics somewhere in East Asia. Then Professor C. N. Yang, Dr. K. K. Phua and I started to realize this dream.

In January 1981, I was invited by the Chinese Academy of Science to a workshop on nuclear physics. On this occasion, it was my good fortune to meet Dr. Tsien San-Tsiang, the vice president of the Academy (in those days). We exchanged many ideas on how to develop international cooperation on science and technology, how to organize the Asia Pacific Physical Society, and especially how to organize an international conference on physics. Dr. Tsien San-Tsiang agreed with me that an organization such as the Asia Pacific Physical Society as well as international conferences on physics, chemistry, biology, and technology were necessary.

He also told me that if conferences on physics and others disciplines were held in China, China could invite delegations from Taiwan and Korea, but it would be very difficult to send Chinese delegations to Korea because diplomatic relations between China and Korea had not officially been established yet. However, he did indicate the possibility of sending Chinese physicists to Singa-

pore, although China still did not have official diplomatic relations with Singapore. These words convinced me that China would be cooperative towards the Society and receptive to participating in the international conferences.

For a few weeks in the spring of 1981, Professor C. N. Yang and Dr. K. K. Phua stayed at the Institute of Fundamental Physics, Kyoto University. Professor Z. Maki, the director of this Institute at that time held a meeting to discuss how and where to organize the first Asia Pacific Physics Conference. The members of this meeting were Professor C. N. Yang, Dr. K. K. Phua, Professor Y. Yamaguchi of the University of Tokyo and me, in addition to Professor Maki. We concluded that Singapore National University should organize the Conference with the cooperation of Japan.

I was nominated in September 1980 as a member of the board of directors of the Physical Society of Japan. Dr. K. K. Phua sent a letter in December 1980 to the President of the Physical Society of Japan, Professor Miyahara. In this letter he proposed to organize the Asia Pacific Physics Conference in Singapore and requested Japan to cosponsor it. President Miyahara asked me to be the chairman of a committee to discuss whether Japan would cosponsor this Conference or not. I then was nominated in September 1981 as the president of Physical Society of Japan. I explained in a number of meetings and documents the necessity of promoting the international collaboration with Asia Pacific countries, especially China and Korea, although in those days a majority of Japanese scientists were interested only in collaborations with Europe and U.S.A.

Ironically the most difficult task of mine was to negotiate with Japanese colleagues. On several occasions, I was severely criticized by quite a few Japanese physicists whose campaign slogan was “Social Responsibility of Physicists”. Some of their questions were as follows:

The first question was: “what does this conference mean for Asian people, and for whose benefit, by whom and for what is this conference organized?” The second question was: “it is very dangerous if the budget of this Conference is supported by companies that exploit their poor workers and create pollution. What do you think about this problem?”, and so on. I had to answer them. I explained to them that the Conference stimulates the education and economy of Asia Pacific region. I still do not understand why they were so critical and even nasty. They are now very quiet.

In January 1982, I visited Dacca in order to attend an international conference on physics organized by the Bangladesh Physical Society. This conference was a sort of joint meeting of physical societies of East Asian countries to discuss how to apply physics to the development of society. Many leading physicists attended this meeting from Bangladesh, India, Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia etc. I gave a talk on basic physics and its role in education and in the economical and industrial development of society. I took this good opportunity to request their help to organize the Conference in order to promote physics in the Asia and Pacific region. They promised their help to us, and indeed they contributed not only to the organization of the Conference in Singapore but also to the establishment of the Association of Asia Pacific Physical Societies.

Meanwhile Dr. K. K. Phua consulted with physicists of many countries including Australia, North Korea, South Korea, New Zealand, the Philippines and Vietnam, in addition to India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Ban-

gladesh and Thailand. I myself also tried to ask Professor T. Y. Wu in Taipei, Prof. S. H. Ahn in Seoul, Prof. Than Duc Hien in Hanoi and so on for their support.

After such efforts in Singapore by Professor K. K. Phua, in Stony Brook by Professor C. N. Yang, and in Tokyo by us, the first Asia Pacific Conference on Physics was held in June 1983 in Singapore. This first conference was very successful.

At the Singapore Conference, we convened an ad hoc meeting in which the main themes were the possibility of the formation of an Association of Asia Pacific Physical Societies and how to organize the future conferences. On October 15, 1989, the Association of Asia Pacific Physical Society (AAPPS) was officially formed. The First General Meeting of AAPPS was held on August 10, 1990 in Seoul, Korea.

In those early days, I appreciated very much the efforts made by Professors C. N. Yang, Ta Yoa Wu, Pei Yuan Zhou, K. K. Phua, S. Chandrasekhar, B. H. J. McKellar, C. A. Hurst, G. V. H. Wilson, S. H. Ahn, and Y. Yamaguchi.

The establishment of the Asia Pacific Center for Theoretical Physics in Pohang has been a fruitful consequence of the international cooperation among physicists in the Asia and Pacific region. I hope that this center continues to thrive and contribute to the development of physics.

It is extremely important to develop physics and more generally science and technology in the Asia Pacific region. For this purpose, the Asia Pacific Conference and the AAPPS play invaluable roles. It is my unwavering belief that this region shall continue to contribute to the development of physics in order to increase the welfare of human beings.



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