

Asia Liberty Forum
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I attended the Asia Liberty Forum held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, on the 18th to the 20th of February 2016. This forum brought together freedom minded people from all over Asia, to discuss challenges Asia faces and to further the advancement of free-market reforms.

Over the three days we heard from members of prominent think tanks around Asia and the rest of the world, who demonstrated their knowledge and influence in the advancement of Libertarianism. We observed many learned speakers who discussed various issues from poverty to Islam. There were various panel discussions on freedom and political changes across Asia. I immensely enjoyed having the open opportunity to talk with such influential people; to share ideas and to simply listen and engage with their powerful messages.

A session that I found interesting was the talks on poverty chaired by Jonathon Moody of PovertyCure. Poverty is very prominent in Asia; there is a want to turn aid into something that is more effective: enterprise. It was emphasised that there should be empowerment of the poor so that they can participate in decisions affecting their lives. Where, a society focuses on the mentality of “we need to help them” and “we need to make them better off” (a paternalism way of thinking) does not assist in any way. There needs to be ways to help without actually interfering with what they want to do. These principles, we can implement within Australia.

A major highlight for me was meeting Ekta Sodha, owner of Sodha Schools India and Vice President of National Independent Schools Alliance (NISA), who has become a new inspiration of mine. She spoke at the session on Private School Revolution in Asia. Ekta spoke about her story and her the ways in which she has developed and encouraged private schooling in India. She spoke about how the quality of education is better in low cost private schools in comparison to government schools. The government imposes strict guidelines and admission criteria upon students. Ekta takes an open attitude to learning, where a student has an open and willing approach to wanting to learn they are welcome to attend her schools.

Overall, this conference has been an invaluable experience and I am thankful for the unforgettable opportunity. My experiences in Kuala Lumpur were nothing short of exciting and vibrant in both food and culture.