



## SEMINAR SERIES



### Chandran Nair

Founder & CEO, Global Institute For Tomorrow

**Chair:** Stavros Yiannouka  
Vice-Dean (Executive Education) and Director, External Affairs  
Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy

**Date:** Monday, 2 November 2009

**Time:** 12.15 p.m. - 1.30 p.m.

**Venue:** Seminar Room 3-5, Level 3  
Manasseh Meyer  
Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy  
469C Bukit Timah Road, Singapore 259772

For those interested in attending, please contact Siti at 6516 4202/ 5357 or email [sppsr@nus.edu.sg](mailto:sppsr@nus.edu.sg)

This is a brown bag seminar and you are most welcome to bring your own packed lunch

# Consumption Economics and the Sustainability of Asia: The Role of Public Policy

## ABOUT THE SPEAKER

Chandran Nair is a true internationalist, having lived and worked in Asia, Europe and Africa. His Global Institute For Tomorrow (GIFT) is an Asian first: an independent social venture think tank dedicated to advancing understanding of key issues and challenges of globalisation in Asia – the role of business in society, governance and ethics, and leadership development. Before founding GIFT in 2004 he built Asia's leading environmental consultancy, ERM. For more than a decade, Mr Nair has strongly advocated a more sustainable approach to development in Asia, and has helped governments and corporations instil these principles into their key decision-making process. He continues to advise the Hong Kong Government, devising a new approach that gives the public a bigger role in key policy-making decisions – a first for Asia. He has addressed many of these issues at forums around the world, notably at speaking engagements in London, New York, Sydney, and all the major Asian capitals. His opinions have appeared in leading international media platforms including the Financial Times and BBC. He lectures energetically, earning a reputation for insightful observation on geo-political realities and a refreshing perspective. Beyond speaking, he seeks practical, long-term solutions through his innovative Global Young Leaders Programme. Mr Nair is a visiting scholar at the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology's School of Business, running a course, "Leading in Asia for the Future", as part of the HKUST MBA programme. He is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts and a member of the Editorial Advisory Board for the Ethical Corporation. A keen sportsman, Mr Nair managed the Hong Kong hockey team for seven years, taking it to the 2002 Asian Games in South Korea. He plays the saxophone and used to head a band in Africa.

The Global Institute For Tomorrow (GIFT) [www.globalinstitutefortomorrow.com](http://www.globalinstitutefortomorrow.com)

## SYNOPSIS

Consumption is the fuel that has driven the engine of global capitalism. The financial crisis of 2008/9 has had the world's leading economists and policy makers in the West urge Asia to make a conscious effort to consume more and thereby save the global economy. This is a view shaped by conventional wisdom and conveniently refuses to acknowledge limits to growth. The talk will argue that this blinkered view needs to be replaced by a more rational approach to meet the challenges of the 21st century. It should be clear to all that if Asians aspire to attain consumption levels taken for granted in the West the results will be catastrophic globally both to the environment and for climate change. Needless to say it will also have significant geopolitical impacts as nations scramble for diminishing resources. The talk will outline that Western consumption levels cannot be attained by the majority of Asians and is in fact undesirable. But how will Asian governments respond to this reality which in many ways is already upon us? The current belief is that technological and financial innovation will, if deployed effectively, help overcome these challenges. The reality is that they cannot and the sooner policy makers openly recognize this, the better so that a different future is shaped. There are several though difficult options for Asia but policy makers in the region must start by shaping the public's expectations whilst being committed to improving livelihoods. In this way Asia will find itself reshaping capitalism.