The Japan Association for Asian Political and Economic Studies held its 43rd National Convention on October 28th and 29th, 1989, at Matsuzaka University in Mie.

The main theme was “Present Situation of Economic Development in Asia” and six papers were presented of which two were on China, one on South Asia (India), one on ASEAN (Thailand), and two on NIES (Republic of Korea and Taiwan).

The first paper was entitled “The Achievements of the Reform of the Chinese Economic System” presented by Katsuji NAKAGANE (The University of Tokyo). He explained that during the past decade (1979–88) there had been certain economic improvements including economic growth, standards of living, internationalization of trade, investment and technology, and structural adjustment from an economy previously biased towards heavy industry. On the other hand, the speaker noted that various critical structural problems had emerged, including increases of income disparity between/within urban and rural areas; three types of open, hidden and repressed inflations; increase in trade imbalance and foreign debt; and increases in unemployment. But the most critical problem was the decline of people’s belief in the system & ideology of socialism.

The other paper on China was “Continuation, Succession, and Development of Chinese Traditional Villages: Real and Unreal Images of Chinese Socialism” by Hiroshi ISHIDA (Kansai University). He argued that in the process of the Chinese socialist revolution, rural people had been forced to make heavy sacrifices in favour of the industrialization and urbanization of China. The government organized the collective farming system to ensure good supplies of food at low prices, and prohibited peasants from moving into urban areas & risking social stability of urban areas. He insisted that the hierarchy of human relationships, inherited from the traditional rural society, had been kept and fully utilized throughout the revolution. Thus the basic social structure of Chinese traditional villages had persisted during the revolution despite its new-socialist nature.

The third paper was “Characteristics of Economic Development Strategies in India: ‘Adjustment’ and ‘Economic Liberalization’” by Akio NISHIGUCHI (Doshisha University). He characterized Indian economic development strategies in two ways: (1) political democracy had been considered a high priority for the national unification of a heterogeneous Indian society; and (2) highly bureaucratic economic controls had been introduced because of their distrust of the free market mechanism. The government stressed the social equity on one hand, and promoting heavy industries as national enterprises on the other, this resulted in structural inflexibility and the restraint economic growth of India. Economic liberalization and high-technologies were introduced to counter act such deficiencies since the end of 1970s but he believed such adjustments made very little difference to
the basic characteristics of Indian industry.

Toshio TASAKA (Osaka University of Economics and Law) read a paper on "ASEAN: An Analysis of the Thai Economy & Attitudes to Capitalism." He argued that there were three critical problems in Thailand's movement toward capitalism, which might throw some light on common economic problems facing ASEAN countries, these were (1) The export-investment oriented growth promotion of the NIES type development strategies might generate further debt crisis. (2) Urban economy could not absorb and sustain incoming laborers from rural areas and often pushed them back to rural areas again, where they were obliged to open new land for cultivation thus threatening the whole world's well-being by destroying the forests. (3) The polarization of enterprises—between large scale businesses and small firms—had resulted the labor market developing a small class of skilled workers and a large class of unskilled workers.

The first paper for NIES study was "Present Situation of Korean Economic Development" by Hiroshi SAKURAI (Kurume University). He showed how the Korean economy had produced high economic growth, economic structural changes in GDP and employment, diversification and modernization of manufacturing industries, less dependence on investment from abroad onto domestic savings. These were, he argued, still many problems, including income disparities between urban and rural regions. reflecting different educational levels, significant economic concentrations in the large scale enterprise groups, unstable relationship between capital and labor, and public pollution and environment problems. For the future, he stressed the importance of Korea developing manufacturing industries of machinery and parts.

Another paper for NIES was "Taiwanese Economic Development" by Shinkei RYU (Tokyo University of Economics). He highly valued Taiwan's macro economic performance in the past regarding GNP growth rate, export growth, low increase in price levels, high national saving ratio and capital formation, and structural transformation toward industrial economy with high technology from a labor intensive economy. He suggested Taiwan's possibility of shifting from a developing country by the end of this century. However, he noted that such bright prospects could be affected by many problems such as the excessive money liquidity, with a limited domestic investment opportunity, labor shortage, pushing wages higher, environmental problems, dual economic structures of private and national and of domestic and foreign capital. He reminded his audience that Taiwanese economy had still kept the historical characteristic of a heavy dependence upon foreign economies.

The major issues commonly raised by all the papers, which also ran through the discussions, covered many aspects of economic, social and political problems due especially to a rather high macro-economic growth realized in Asian countries. The problems included those of unbalanced regional growth, debt, national & international environment, the relationship between development-oriented dictatorship and political democracy, whether to have national and private enterprises, the economic concentration in large scale enterprises, and the labor market. The proceedings of the conference will be published as AZIYA KENKYU (Asian Studies), Vol. 37, No. 3.

(Saburo YAMADA)