

120 youths to take on roles of young journalists during APEC Summit

SINGAPORE: World leaders will gather in Singapore for the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Summit in less than a week, and apart from engaging with one another, they may just have to deal with some tough questions - but not from your everyday journalists.

In the last few months, 40 Singaporean youths - aged between 18 and 25 years - have been preparing for their once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. They have been selected to take part in the annual APEC Voices of the Future programme, which seeks to give them a greater insight into the organisation.

Natalie Morris, chairperson of APEC Voices of the Future 2009's Youth Organising Committee, said: "It's very easy, I think, for the APEC issues to lose its relevance for the young people - when you don't know so much about them (the issues) and you have not had the opportunity to learn about them."



(Photo: <http://www.apec2009.sg>)

"So when young people get involved, they are encouraged to think about the issues. And when they write about them, they are encouraged to reflect and then they will get to see the relevance of APEC in their own lives and in their own economy."

The youths will get the chance to interview APEC leaders, and some of them have already set their sights on who, and what to ask.

Avnish Desai, a 23-year-old undergraduate from the Singapore Management University, said: "Everyone will like to meet US President Obama, (or) perhaps the Prime Minister of Australia, Kevin Rudd... and if possible, I will like to meet the President of China."

"I will (also) like to meet (US Treasury Secretary) Timothy Geithner himself - the man behind what's happening behind the regulations in the US and its impact on the rest of the world."

The programme will also bring together another 80 young journalists from the other APEC economies.

Shaniszah Jamaruddin, a 20-year-old Nanyang Polytechnic student, said: "I want to make more friends, as well as share different experiences from their perspective, from the youth perspective of things."

As part of the Voices of the Future programme, the Singaporean delegates will also be showcasing various aspects of Singapore to the international delegates. This will include trips to the Night Safari, the Marina Barrage, and HDB heartlands.



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Their reports will be put on the programme's website everyday, and eventually be compiled and circulated to APEC stakeholders.

The stakeholders include the Singapore Business Foundation, Virtual Trade Mission, national youth focal points in the APEC economies, Singapore's Minister for Community Development, Youth and Sports, Vivian Balakrishnan, and Singapore's President, S R Nathan.

The Voices of the Future programme is organised by the National Youth Council in cooperation with Singapore's Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports and the National Youth Achievement Award (NYAA) Council.