

ASIAN INNOVATION AWARDS

Health Solutions Lead List of Finalists

Entrepreneurs From Across Asia Seek New Ways in Tackling the Region's Well-Being and Economic Challenges

BY JURO OSAWA

Finding solutions to health-related problems and empowering people and communities in emerging economies are the broad themes for many of this year's finalists in The Wall Street Journal's annual Asian Innovation Awards.

Those themes also were prominent among the more than 240 applications the Journal received this year. A team of Journal editors narrowed the pool to 52, and an independent panel of judges from the private sector and academia worked with the editors to further trim the number to 12 finalists.

The judges will choose the winners, which will be announced in November. The applications will be primarily judged on creativity or degree of innovation, quality of execution and potential impact on quality of life or productivity.

Finalists focusing on health and well-being address a broad range of issues. Hong Kong-based **Ckicom Technology Ltd.** has created a disposable adult diaper that can measure wetness and allow caretakers to monitor the condition using wireless technology. Researchers at Singapore-based **Clearbridge BioMedics Pte.** have developed new biochip technology that helps isolate rare tumor cells from blood.

The Journal received entries from all corners of Asia. Three of this year's 12 finalists are from India, while another three come from Singapore and another three from Hong Kong. The other three finalists are from the Philippines, Pakistan and Australia.

The finalists take diverse approaches to the problems they are trying to solve. For some, inspiration comes from the unique challenges facing their countries.

From Pakistan, a social enterprise called **Naya Jeevan** has developed what it describes as a "health plan for the marginalized," providing low-income families in emerging economies with affordable access to catastrophic health care.

Another social enterprise that tries to improve the lives of people in emerging economies is Ru-

Asian Innovation Awards 2012 Finalists			
AUSTRALIA RightShip	HONG KONG Ckicom Technology	HONG KONG James Law Cybertecture	HONG KONG Ocean Blue Software
RightShip: An online service that rates ships' environmental efficiency.	CAREase inductive diaper: Disposable diapers that automatically detect moisture and transmit the data wirelessly to health-care providers.	Cybertecture Mirror: A mirror equipped with health-monitoring and diagnostic features for daily "check-ins."	Talking TV: A set-top box that speaks menu items, listings and on-screen prompts to customers with eyesight problems.
INDIA Luna Ergonomics	INDIA RuralShores Business Services	INDIA Young India Fellowship Programme	PAKISTAN Naya Jeevan
Panini Keypad: A mobile-phone virtual keypad using predictive technology that lets Indians input words from the country's major languages.	RuralShores: A business-process-outsourcing program that taps underemployed workers in India's rural areas.	viSparsh: A belt for the blind that detects potential obstacles with motion-sensing technology.	Naya Jeevan Micro-Insurance: Affordable health-care plans for low-income families in Pakistan.
PHILIPPINES Hapinoy	SINGAPORE Clearbridge BioMedics	SINGAPORE A*STAR Institute of Materials Research & Engineering	SINGAPORE Viki
IBN MicroKit: A program for convenience-store owners that takes advantage of bulk buying, group training and other initiatives to boost sales.	ClearCell CTChip: A biomedical chip that can detect and isolate tumor cells in the blood.	Soft body armor: A flexible polymer material that hardens on impact.	Viki social TV: An online-video site using crowdsourced translations to provide TV shows in multiple languages.

Sources: the companies

ralShores Business Services from India, an outsourcing company for back-office operations that set up centers in rural villages in an attempt to provide young people with sustainable employment.

Another finalist from India, a new

mobile-texting technology called **Panini Keypad**, allows users to type in all the major languages in India as well as some foreign languages, seeking to bridge the countries' linguistic communities.

From the Philippines, the **Hapinoy**

Store Program offers micro-financing to small neighborhood convenience stores called "sari-sari"—Filipino for "various kinds"—while also providing women entrepreneurs with opportunities.

Two finalists are focusing on chal-

lenges facing visually impaired people. One of them, **Young India Fellowship Programme**, has developed **viSparsh**, a belt-like device worn around the waist that detects obstacles ahead and sends vibrations, enabling the user to determine the direction and proximity of the obstacle. Its name merges "vision" and "sparsh," which means "touch" in Hindi.

Another product, **Talking TV** from Hong Kong-based **Ocean Blue Software (HK) Ltd.**, enables people with eyesight problems to have a better TV viewing experience. A set-top box talks viewers through TV program guides and menu items.

In Singapore, **A*STAR Institute of Materials Research and Engineering** has developed flexible material that remains soft under normal conditions but hardens upon impact. The material can be used in many areas such as sports, industrial safety and packaging, the firm says.

From Australia, **RightShip Pty.** has developed an online system for rating the environmental efficiency of ships. The system uses a database updated daily and an algorithm for measuring energy efficiency.

In the area of more consumer-oriented innovations, the **Cybertecture mirror**, developed by Hong Kong-based **James Law Cybertecture (Mirror) Ltd.**, is a large Internet-enabled bathroom mirror that can double as a display for digital content. The mirror also can help monitor the user's health conditions.

Another technology targeting consumers is a Singapore-based start-up called **Viki**, which has created a social video-streaming site. It allows viewers to translate TV shows and movies into other languages.

In the coming weeks, we will feature the 12 finalists before announcing the AIA winners as well as the **Technopreneur of the Year**, which honors an entry that best applies technology with the greatest potential for commercial success.

Credit Suisse sponsors the awards. The judges are selected by journalists at The Wall Street Journal, and coverage of the event and its winners is the sole responsibility of the Journal's news department.

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