

## Programmes for grooming talent

OVER the past four decades, Asia has been home to the world's fastest-growing economies, including India and China, which are driving global gross domestic product (GDP) growth.

According to the Asian Development Bank, if the momentum continues, the region will account for half of global GDP by 2050.

The World Bank forecasts that Asia's expanding middle class will account for 80 per cent of the growth in spending by the segment by 2030.

Companies seeking to tap the region's potential are looking for strong, stable bases and the right people to man them.

This is where Singapore has an edge, says Mr Alvin Tan, assistant managing director of the Economic Development Board (EDB), who oversees its human capital initiatives. Given its small size, there has always been a focus on building up market knowledge among the talent pool, he adds.

The EDB, for instance, trains more than 2,500 Singaporeans each year for roles in various sectors through its Leadership Initiatives, Networks and Knowledge talent and leadership ecosystem.

In-school and on-the-job training programmes are created in collaboration with employers and institutes of higher learning to develop relevant skills.

At the centre of this ecosystem is the Human Capital Leadership Institute (HCLI), established jointly with the Ministry of Manpower and Singapore Management University in 2010. It organises training and networking events, and drives research initiatives on the region.

The EDB also works with companies to design and enhance developmental opportunities for talent. Its Management Associate/Graduate Leadership Programme, for instance, has been developed with companies such as MasterCard. It accelerates the careers of young people with potential by exposing them to various business functions, and granting overseas attachments.

Further up the ladder is the Global-Asia Management Associate Programme (GMP), which was set up in 2012 and has since trained eight potential Singaporean leaders with a global mindset. This puts them in good stead for roles in top international companies known for being "people developers", such as Rolls-Royce. GMP is open to executives with at least four years of work experience and enrolled in MBA programmes. It includes a two-month internship, followed by a senior position at the company.

For those who are already leaders, there is the Singapore Business Leaders Programme. It is HCLI's flagship programme for global businesses expanding their footprint in Asia, and Asian businesses going global. Since 2011, it has brought 105 business and political leaders together with academics and consultants to exchange perspectives on negotiating the region and capitalising on opportunities.

Together, these programmes develop a pipeline of talent that has three key qualities – functional competence, industry experience and a keen understanding of the market and the trends that impact it – so companies can stay ahead of the curve.

"It will mean that Singapore and Singaporeans are able to capture the opportunities arising from the growth of Asia and the emerging markets," says Mr Tan.