



CCA NEWS

ASIAN ECUMENICAL YOUTH ASSEMBLY (AEYA-2026) ■ CHIANG MAI, THAILAND ■

Asia faces mounting geo-political and geo-economic strain amidst accelerating shifts in global order, observes Dr Mathews George Chunakara

Mounting geopolitical tensions and geo-economic disruptions are placing Asia at the centre of a rapidly changing and increasingly unstable global order, observed Dr Mathews George Chunakara, General Secretary of the Christian Conference of Asia, on the second day of the Asian Ecumenical Youth Assembly (AEYA-2026).

Delivering the second thematic address on “Asia Navigating Amidst the Evolving Geo-political and Geo-economic Challenges”, Dr Chunakara explained how ongoing conflicts and power rivalries are already having far-reaching consequences for the region. He pointed in particular to the 2026 United States war on Iran, which has triggered a severe energy crisis, soaring oil prices, and disruptions in the Strait of Hormuz, developments that disproportionately affect Asia, a major importer of oil, natural gas and fertiliser from the West Asia region. The damage inflicted by the US and Israel on Iran is likely to have long-lasting consequences for Asia, including potential food security challenges. Rising inflationary pressures, slowing industrial growth, and broader economic losses are contributing to an



increasingly bleak economic outlook for the region.

A long-time international affairs observer and commentator, who is also the moderator of the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs (CCIA) of the World Council of Churches, Dr Mathews George Chunakara situated these developments within an accelerating shift from a rules-based international order and multilateral system toward a more chaotic global order. He warned that the world is entering a phase in which the “law of the jungle” is increasingly overriding the rules-based international order, with powerful nations asserting dominance rather than respecting and working

through multilateral frameworks.

“The current global context is one of deep fragmentation, marked by intensifying great-power rivalry, especially between the United States and China, growing mistrust among nations, ongoing conflicts in regions such as Ukraine and West Asia, rising trade protectionism, and competition over critical resources. These are not distant concerns but forces directly shaping Asia’s strategic and economic environment”, Dr Chunakara emphasised.

Pointing to developments such as Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, China’s growing military assertiveness, and the rearmament of Japan and Germany, he argued that both major and smaller powers are contributing to the erosion of the current international order. He further described recent conflicts and geopolitical actions across Ukraine, Nagorno-Karabakh, Gaza, Syria, and Lebanon, alongside controversial moves involving the United States, as signs of a systemic breakdown of global norms.

“Whom does this world belong to, and where are we heading?” he asked, expressing concern over increasingly transactional...

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CONTRIBUTIONS

We welcome your thoughts, reflections, and contributions. Please send them to: info@cca.org.hk



SOCIAL MEDIA

Join the conversation on social media! Follow Christian Conference of Asia on Facebook and Instagram, and use the official hashtag **#AEYA2026**

**TODAY'S SESSIONS
(19 APRIL)**

09:00 AM – 02:00 PM

Participation in Local Church Services in Chiang Mai

02:30 PM – 04:00 PM

Thematic address III
Break Every Yoke: When Faith Under the Yoke, Affirm Identity in Christ

04:30 PM – 06:00 PM

AEYA Core (Spiritual & Liturgical Expressions)

- Indigenous prayers
- Laments from conflict areas
- Hymns of resistance and hope

Asian youth explore “Breaking Every Yoke” through contextual Bible study



**SPEAKER
SPOTLIGHT**

*Thematic Address III
Break Every Yoke: When Faith Under the Yoke, Affirm Identity in Christ*

Rev. Dr Jeniffer Fresy Porielly Wowor



Rev. Dr Jeniffer Fresy Porielly Wowor is a scholar and an ordained pastor of the Gereja Protestan di Indonesia bagian Barat (The Protestant Church in the Western Part of Indonesia). She serves as Assistant Professor at the Faculty of Theology, Duta Wacana Christian University, Indonesia, and was appointed Director of the Partnerships and Public Relations Office in 2026.

The second day of the Asian Ecumenical Youth Assembly began with participants gathering for structured Bible study sessions. Divided into ten groups and guided by facilitators, they engaged deeply with the Assembly’s theme, “Break Every Yoke” (Isaiah 58:6), setting a thoughtful and meaningful tone for the day ahead.

The sessions created a platform for critical engagement with Scripture, focusing on justice, inclusion, and the realities faced by young people across Asia. Discussions were marked by openness, diversity of perspectives, and a willingness to question, reflecting true ecumenical spirituality.

Group 3 reflected on 1 Peter 2:13–17, examining the theme of submission to authority, particularly political power. The group examined the complexities of obedience in contexts where

governance may be unjust or restrictive. Participants discussed the tension between respecting authority and remaining committed to justice and truth, noting that submission in the biblical sense does not imply passive acceptance of oppression but calls for discernment and faithful witness.

Engaging with Acts 10:1–48, group 7 focused on the question of boundaries within communities. Their discussion explored what “yokes” exist today in the form of social divisions such as caste, class, ethnicity, and denominational differences. The group emphasised that the story of Peter and Cornelius highlights God’s inclusive vision, which challenges human prejudices and barriers.

Deliberating on Mark 5:1–20, group 10 focused on themes of trauma, healing, and the liberating love of God. The story of Jesus’ miracle was understood

as a powerful example of healing that restores dignity and identity.

Group 5 explored the meaning of worship through activities and small group discussions, seeking to understand it not merely as ritual but as a lived, transformative experience.

Discussing the role of youth in political contexts, particularly the ideas of neutrality and survival, Group 1 reflected that instead of following “political heroes,” young people must be empowered through education, enabling them to respond thoughtfully and constructively to societal challenges.

Group 4 reflected on 1 Corinthians 12, exploring the idea of “one body” or “one cord,” while acknowledging the reality of disconnection and identity struggles among youth. The discussion highlighted the tension between unity and fragmentation, calling for deeper efforts to rebuild identity and community in Christ.

Across all ten groups, the Bible study created a space for honest reflection, theological engagement, and shared learning. Participants were encouraged not only to interpret Scripture but to apply its message in addressing injustice, exclusion, and brokenness.



Beyond borders: Asian youth reflect on migration, identity and faith

In the afternoon of the second day of AEYA 2026, the panel discussion titled “Break Every Yoke: Impact of Migration of Young Asians Beyond Their Borders” brought together four speakers from diverse backgrounds to reflect on this pressing issue. The session was moderated by Amelia Tuimala Lavaki from the Uniting Church in Australia.



Saw Joy Say from the Kawthoolei Karen Baptist Bible School & College described the reality of Karen refugees, many of whom have spent their entire lives in camps along the Thailand–Myanmar border. With nine camps in place, a whole generation has grown up in displacement. For them, migration is not a choice but a lifelong condition, bringing deep physical, emotional and spiritual challenges.

Mr Say identified three main “yokes” carried by young people in these camps. The first is the loss of hope, as prolonged uncertainty leads many to feel their future is limited. The second is the challenge of education. Despite the dedication of teachers and students, camp-based education is not officially recognised, leaving young people with few opportunities beyond the camp. The third is a growing structural crisis, as low teacher support drives many to leave, while cuts to food rations and medical care place increasing pressure on families.

In response, he highlighted three roles for the Church: hospitality, welcoming refugees as brothers and sisters; protection, speaking out against injustice; and empowerment, supporting education, training and faith formation to restore hope. He also emphasised the need for collaboration among churches, organisations and leaders to strengthen schools, advocate for recognition, and create safe spaces for young people.

Mariel Sampiton Dalida, representing the Convention of Philippine Baptist Churches, spoke about the migration of



Filipinos in search of better opportunities, describing it not simply as movement, but as transformation that reshapes identity, faith and family life.

Ms Dalida highlighted key challenges faced by young migrants, including cultural adjustment, language barriers, and emotional struggles such as homesickness and discouragement. At the same time, she noted that migration can open pathways for growth, enabling young people to develop leadership and adaptability, support their families, and engage in ministry.

She urged that migration be seen as both a blessing and a challenge, with its “yokes” found in discouragement, barriers and injustice, to be broken through trust in God, mutual support, and a commitment to live beyond self-centredness.

She challenged the assembly: “Let us not allow fear, poverty or cultural barriers to hold us back. Instead, let us embrace migration as part of God’s purpose. Let us serve Him by serving others, and trust that every burden we carry can be broken by His power.”



Simon Bunthoeun Sopanha, a Seoul-based anthropologist of Cambodian origin representing the National Council of Churches in Korea, reflected on how migration from Southeast Asia is reshaping

South Korea’s social and religious landscape. He noted that young migrants, especially workers and students, navigate new environments while maintaining strong ties to their home communities.

He observed that Korean churches have traditionally understood mission as something carried out abroad. However, with migrants now within South Korea, mission must also be lived out locally through multicultural engagement that integrates evangelism with social care.

Mr Sopanha highlighted that many migrants struggle to remain connected to church life due to language barriers, cultural differences and limited access to familiar worship. While the church can offer a vital sense of belonging, denominational divisions often hinder this, leading some to disengage.

“An ecumenical vision grounded in the concept of ‘one church under God’ offers a possible response to this challenge. By prioritising shared faith over denominational boundaries, churches can create more accessible and welcoming spaces for migrant communities,” he said, emphasising the need for unity and inclusivity.



Thea Ann Kurien, representing the Jacobite Syrian Orthodox Church in India, grounded her presentation in Scripture, reflecting on migration through biblical narratives such as Abram’s call and the story of Daniel. She emphasised that migration is not merely geographical movement, but a deeper shift in identity, belonging and purpose.

She highlighted the hidden, internal costs of migration, particularly for young people who move for education or work. Beneath outward success often lie loneliness, pressure and quiet exhaustion, alongside the loss of familiar anchors such as family and community. In such contexts, identity



can become fragmented and faith can slowly drift.

In response, Ms Kurien emphasised the vital role of the Church. She called on churches to recognise the often unseen emotional and spiritual struggles of migrants, to create safe and authentic spaces of belonging, and to become communities of restoration. While migration can fragment identity, she affirmed that the Church has the responsibility to help restore it.

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...approaches to international relations that prioritise short-term gains over long-term alliances, shared values, and international law.

Focusing on Asia, Dr Chunakara highlighted an evolving regional order shaped by shifting military dynamics, external interventions, and rising strategic competition in the region. He also commented on the competing visions for Asia's future, but cautioned that no credible vision

is likely to prevail soon.

Emphasising the role of civil society, Dr Chunakara stressed that people's movements, particularly those led by young people, will be critical in shaping a more just and peaceful future. He called on youth to actively engage in advocacy, dialogue, and collective action to uphold democratic values, strengthen accountability, and promote peace in the face of rising global uncertainties.

Dr Chunakara also underscored the urgent need for renewed commitment to multilateralism, dialogue, and cooperation, alongside empowered civic participation, to enable Asia to navigate the mounting geopolitical and geo-economic challenges ahead.

Abigayle Chesca Bolado, World Council of Churches programme executive for Youth Engagement in the Ecumenical Movement, chaired the session.

YOUTH IN DIALOGUE



Integrity in Leadership and Governance





Prophetic Witness and Obedience



Mental Health and God's Protection



AI - Technology, Innovation, and Responsibility



Social Media Captivity

CCA IN HISTORY

PARTICIPANTS OF THE ASIAN ECUMENICAL YOUTH ASSEMBLY - 1984

