Going Barefoot, Robot Avatars and Autism Breakthroughs Headline 3rd Iclif Leadership Energy Awards

**ILEA Advisory Council Adds Top-Tier Governance & Prestige to Unique Accolade**

Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia – A groundbreaking peer-to-peer learning concept for rural communities in India, a futuristic AI-driven creation to eliminate human loneliness, and a global movement for inclusiveness spawned from a single passionate individual, all received due recognition at the 2017 Iclif Leadership Energy Awards (ILEA). The ILEA ceremony, held on 9th November 2017, as part of the Iclif Leadership Energy Summit Asia – the biggest leadership energy event of the year – at Sasana Kijang, Kuala Lumpur, saw inspiring Asian leaders receive much-deserved accolades for their contributions in their respective fields.

Bunker Roy of the Barefoot College, Kentaro Yoshifuji of Ory Laboratory, and VR Ferose of SAP were selected from over 65 nominees across Asia as recipients in the Social Enterprise, Business Owner and Corporate Employee categories respectively, after deliberation by an esteemed panel of judges. The panel was overseen by the newly established ILEA Advisory Council led by former Bank Negara Malaysia governor Tan Sri Dato’ Sri Zeti Akhtar Aziz, which is responsible for identifying, evaluating and awarding candidates for future awards, while also providing mentorship to ensure nominees achieve their fullest potential. This adds a level of accountability, transparency and reputability to further distinguish ILEA from other leadership awards initiatives, in addition to its unique selection criteria, which focuses on candidates with an extraordinary purpose, a relentless drive and who have attained a measurable, sustainable impact.

These elements are particularly significant in the context of this year’s winners. Bunker Roy, who won in the Social Enterprise category, gave up a potentially lucrative career to dig wells in the outskirts of India, where he experienced first-hand the impact of famine and extreme poverty. This drove him to embrace the rural poor and champion the idea that solutions to rural issues lay, not in innovation from outside forces, but within communities themselves. He established a unique peer-to-peer learning programme called the Barefoot college, which, to date, has transformed the lives of over 2,000,000 people in 80 countries; as an example of his tremendous impact, his system has trained more than 15,000 women in remote villages to become solar engineers.

Kentaro Yoshifuji of Ory Laboratory, winner of the Business Owner category, was also inspired by a life-changing personal experience to solve one of humanity’s most often-overlooked conditions; loneliness. In his youth, he spent three years isolated from the world due to stress and illness, a period that devastated him in many ways. Fortunately for Kentaro, instead of breaking him, this inspired him to take on eliminating human loneliness as his life goal, leading to the creation of the robot avatar OriHime. While OriHime is undoubtedly high tech at its core, built using sophisticated artificial intelligence and groundbreaking technology, unlike other robot creations, it is also high-touch in approach, focusing on facilitating human-to-human connections.
OriHime has been applied to helping immobile, bed-bound and quarantined individuals become active in society again, hopefully making loneliness a thing of the past.

This theme of inclusiveness continues with VR Ferose, Head of Globalisation Services at SAP and winner in the Corporate Employee Category. He helped transform the SAP Labs in Gurgaon from a struggling entity with high attrition rate, low performance and even lower morale into an innovation hub and one of the best places to work in India in just 5 years, leading it to become #1 overall in employee satisfaction across SAP. His most important contribution, however, was developing ground-breaking new inclusion policies for people with autism. His passionate advocacy for this cause, springing from discovering his own child had autism, has today become a global movement, with some of the world’s leading businesses following his example. SAP, too, made a major commitment; 1% of its hires would be individuals on the autism spectrum.

With the ILEA Advisory council in place, it is the commitment and objective of Iclif Leadership and Governance Centre to make ILEA a reputable and globally recognised award initiative to acknowledge leaders throughout Asia who have channeled their personal leadership energy into leading transformative, long-lasting change. This annual event is held as a part of the Leadership Energy Summit Asia 2017, Iclif’s flagship annual leadership energy event, with recipients receiving USD15,000 each at the ceremony in Kuala Lumpur.

About Iclif:

We are an Asia-based international centre dedicated to executive education, research, coaching and consulting services in the areas of leadership development, organisational effectiveness and corporate governance. The Iclif Leadership and Governance Centre or Iclif was created and funded by Bank Negara Malaysia (The Central Bank of Malaysia) in 2003 as an independent non-profit organisation with the aim of providing highly practical and relevant executive and organisational development globally across all industry and government sectors.