

Creativity, technology: what a city needs to become future leader

Seoul Mayor Oh Se-hoon said yesterday at an international forum that the harmonious integration of creative talents and cutting-edge technology are what a city needs to become a leader in the new era.

"The 10 years to come will open up a whole new world for us, not like the 10 years we had before," said Oh during his welcoming remarks at the Global Metropolitan Forum of Seoul 2010.

"As many scholars emphasize, cities that harmoniously integrate creativity, culture, sensitivity, storytelling, dreams, hope, creative talents and cutting edge technology will be the leading cities in this new chapter of our history."

Hosted by the Seoul Metropolitan Government, the annual forum brought together some 400 scholars, ranking government officials and business leaders from about 15 countries under the main theme of "the Future of Global Metropolis Seoul: From Competition to Boundless Cooperation.

The forum was established in 2007 by the metropolitan government and the National Academy of Sciences with the aim to enhance the city's global competitiveness by sharing good policies and practices implemented by cities around the world.

During his keynote speech, Rolf Jensen, "chief imagination officer" of Dream Company Denmark explained the concept of the "dream city," which he referred to as being at the fourth stage in the developmental history of metropolises.

"The city was the political, administrative and commercial center for the surrounding rural areas. This was true from the beginning of human settlements right up to the industrial revolution. With the industrial revolution came the growth of the city into metropolises," said Jensen.

"The third step -- the current -- is the information society, the digital society, the knowledge-based society. The fourth step is more important than the old and the current one. By 'dream city,' I mean the emotional metropolis driven by aspirations and dream, by happiness and by welfare."

The challenge for Seoul now is to figure out how to advance well into the fourth step, Jensen emphasized.

"Imagine a world without art, without music, songs, films, theaters, without novels and poetry. It would be a terrible, an unbearable world. We must address our emotional needs

and this is what the metropolis must provide in order to be successful in the future," he said.

"We cannot live without imagination, without dreams unless life is about survival only."

Another keynote speaker, renowned American urban studies theorist Richard Florida, stressed that a region's economic development should be driven by the "3Ts" -- technology, talent and tolerance.

"Technology and innovation are critical components in driving economic growth. The driving force behind any effective economic strategy is talented people. A community's ability to attract and retain top talent is the defining issue of the creative age," Florida said.

Explaining "tolerance," he underscored that economic prosperity relies on cultural, entrepreneurial, civic, scientific and artistic creativity.

"Creative workers with these talents need communities, organizations, and peers that are open to new ideas and different people. Places receptive to immigration, alternative lifestyles, and new views on social status and power structures will benefit significantly in the creative age," Florida said.

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