

**EmergingWISE:**

**IndonesiaWISE:**

## **AMOL TITUS: SPEARHEADING DIVERSE INITIATIVES TO BRING ABOUT A CHANGE**

Amol Titus, CEO of IndonesiaWISE is a man of many virtues. He is a well known senior strategic advisor, writer and educationist based in Jakarta. With a distinguished career spanning over 25 years, Amol has an impressive repertoire of expertise and experience in emerging markets, principally in India and Indonesia.

Standing out as a beacon of inspiration, Amol has played a significant role in the development of the Indonesia and India relationship in the spheres of culture, education and bilateral trade. He has served as the President of IndCham (India-Indonesia Chamber of Commerce) and was awarded the Global Visionary Award in 2015 for his role as a "bridge builder" between the two countries.

Driven by a profound empathy, dedication and an unwavering commitment to compassion, Amol ventured into entrepreneurship. As an exemplary leader with visionary approach, he has leveraged his diverse background to spearhead initiatives leaving an incredible mark in the society. The CEOViews is pleased to recognize Amol Titus with the Thought Leadership Award 2023. We interacted with him to gain insights into his leadership journey.



**CEOViews:** You are widely regarded as an inspirational thought leader from Asia especially Southeast Asia. Can you share some of your main intellectual breakthrough ideas and initiatives that you have pioneered?

**Amol Titus:** Thank you very much for your kind words. I would like to mention 4 ideas that are being developed further with collaborative partnerships and projects. First, is what I call 'I.N.G.E.S.T Sustainability'. This is also the title of my book on the subject with the acronym standing for Imperative, New Normal, Governance, Environment, Social and Technology Enabled. These words describe the drivers of practical sustainability initiatives that go beyond mere declarations, campaigns and seminars. We have undertaken multi-stakeholder projects in areas like Sustainable Tourism, Sustainable Textiles and Sustainable Finance where there is pressing need for adoption of sustainability principles.

Second, is what I have termed 'G.I.S.T of Democratic Development'. Once again this is the title of a multi-year research project and book that explores the progress on meaningful democratic development across 50 of the world's major democracies. Beyond limited GDP, growth or investment numbers that are touted I explain the 15 criteria each behind Governance, Inclusiveness,

Sustainability and Transformation that collectively form the GIST of Democratic Development. To ensure validation the criteria are predicated on our own research as well as that conducted by leading Universities and independent think tanks with whom close future engagement is also envisaged.

Third, it is quite unfortunate that urbanization over the past several decades has been haphazard, chaotic and unplanned. Cities have become concrete jungles infested with traffic, plastic and pollution. Youth, who will spend decades in such environments in future, need to get involved, contribute their ideas and become part of the solution. 'Young Leaders for Eco Cities' is an initiative seeking to drive youth-oriented change. For example, when the Asian Games took place in Jakarta and Palembang in Indonesia, we found the youth in the Universities around the venues were quite detached and disinterested. We reached out to them and got them involved in a 'Green Asian Games' awareness campaign that promoted responsible habits such as minimizing plastic consumption and waste. Similarly, at Kochi in Kerala, India University students and youth are helping to research environment impacts at the Vembanad Lake that is the longest freshwater lake in the country.

Fourth, 'Ilmu Digi' or Digital Knowledge, is an initiative focussed on promoting digital education and learning using smart phones. This project that will be rolled out in the coming months will provide access to curated facts, information, concepts, quotes, case studies and articles using a multi-lingual format. Education has become exorbitant and elitist and I believe digitalization offers opportunities for making it more egalitarian and relevant. The platform will invite experts to share, mentor and undertake projects in both the private and public sectors.

I believe in the transformative power of ideation, collaboration and execution and consider myself fortunate to be able to make positive contributions consistently.

**CEOViews:** Kindly take us through your entrepreneurial journey! What sparked your interest in this space?

**Amol Titus:** As you will note from the ideas and initiatives above, I have a natural preference for multi-stakeholder engagement and collaboration. Though my 18 years career was rewarding in terms of exposure and learning, I found organizations to be quite constrained in working with external stakeholders. Such insularity is quite surprising and disappointing because the history of breakthroughs whether in space, vaccines, disaster relief or artificial intelligence has always been built around collaboration. Unfortunately, organizations are still too caught up in narrow competitiveness, brand wars and the whims and fancies of corporate Boards.

I also felt that there was a pressing need for international standard strategic advisory and management consulting services that could be provided at reasonable cost as well as support for non-profit projects in the social and creative economy. So entrepreneurship in setting up the EmergingWISE Group and its principal subsidiary IndonesiaWISE, was a logical step. Great professional scope, latitude, opportunities and achievements have resulted over the past decade. Looking forward to developing the above mentioned and other big ideas further over the decade to come.

**CEOViews:** You have an unparalleled professional career with a demonstrated history of working in the industry. How have your experience and expertise contributed in your leadership journey?

**Amol Titus:** When we are confronted by a crisis, we can adopt one of two approaches. We can either retreat in panic and focus inwards or progress determinedly and look ahead and beyond the immediate. When I arrived in Indonesia in 1998 the country and much of the region was recoiling from the severe Asian Financial Crisis. Doom and gloom scenarios were being propounded everywhere and there was much negativity. Individuals and groups had retreated into their closed silos and groups. Having a flair for writing and teaching apart from my professional pursuits, I devoted considerable time to researching about Indonesia. I became convinced about her inherent strengths, unique cultural characteristics and ability to bounce back after a period of restructuring and reorganization. This conviction was born out and today Indonesia is a confident G20 nation with a bright future. So the positivity oriented approach helped me forge lasting friendships, partnerships and networks that have proved to be very helpful in converting ideas into reality.

My own leadership style, with a natural preference for collaboration, coaching and mentoring, is built around our Group's C.R.I.S.P values framework standing for Creativity, Responsibility, Integrity, Service and Passion. My team and I try to embody these values consistently.

**CEOViews:** Currently, innovation has become more of a need. What according to your understanding is innovation? Being an innovator yourself, how do you drive innovation?

**Amol Titus:** We are experiencing unprecedented levels and pace of innovation. While there are undeniable benefits for consumers, the business world is being racked by volatility and disruption. Many companies are struggling and ill-prepared as they are bureaucratic, change resistant and lacking visionary leadership. Innovation is a combination of intellectual curiosity, scientific vigor and practical application. While copy paste

responses might help but some time they are clearly not enough. Original thinking, proactive R&D and fast commercialization are critical for success. And as the spate of disappointing failures in the start-up world show, innovation without integrity is bound to fail.

As ideators and innovators we all need to intellectually grapple with this beast called Artificial Intelligence. While it can help to positively transform, it also has several downsides that will require our attention. I especially worry about the devastating impact that is already taking place in terms of high youth unemployment. I'd like to see AI properly harnessed in areas of industry-relevant education, coding and research that can provide gainful employment to talented youth. It should also aid breakthroughs needed in medicine, agriculture, climate adaptation, renewable energy and liveable cities among others.

**CEOViews:** What are the future prospects we can expect or envision in the field? In a few years from now, what would be the best manifestation of yourself from your current position and responsibilities?

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**Amol Titus:** The spate of corporate crises due to questionable ethical standards has created havoc in many economies in the first 2 decades of the 21st century. Continued exorbitant government bailouts are neither desirable nor feasible. The solution is for corporates and institutions to drastically and urgently improve their ESG or Environment, Social and Governance protocols. Similarly disruptive changes in technology, consumer behaviors and regulations can also take down stagnant organizations. This requires independent strategic advisory support on a wide range of issues from those with deep industry and country expertise as well as the ability to facilitate collaborative ideation. IndonesiaWISE is well placed to provide such assistance due to its track record and capabilities. Beyond our clients I look forward to participating in results-oriented international projects and collaborations where I can add value.

**CEOViews:** What are your advice and tips for the emerging thought leaders?

**Amol Titus:** I would like to offer 3 tips that I also diligently follow. First, open your mind to diversity of thought and human endeavors. Read, travel and imbibe wisdoms inherent in different fields, cultures and initiatives. Second, avoid the addiction to superficiality and instant gratification that has sadly been spread by social media. Thought leadership requires what I call the 5R discipline of Reflection, Re-examination, Refinement, Review and Results. This takes time and requires patience. Third, adopt a collaborative approach. Facing and surmounting challenges together makes the journey much more worthwhile.

