

Celebrating 20 years of empowering young entrepreneurs: 2026 FedEx/Junior Achievement International Trade Challenge Asia Pacific winners announced

6 youth from across the region emerge top amongst 48 finalists

Singapore, August 20, 2026 –JA Asia Pacific, one of the world's largest and most impactful non-profit youth-serving organizations, together with Federal Express Corporation, one of the world's largest express transportation companies, announced the winners of the 2026 FedEx/JA International Trade Challenge Asia Pacific finals held at a live event in Singapore. The event marks a significant milestone as the program celebrates its 20th year of empowering young people across Asia Pacific with entrepreneurial, business, and international trade skills.

This year's competition attracted over 4,000 youth from 8 markets including Hong Kong SAR, Indonesia, Japan, South Korea, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand.

48 young people gathered in Singapore for the Asia Pacific finals and were tasked to create a market entry strategy for an Innovative and sustainable product that repurposes used packaging materials into a sustainable solution that delivers economic, environmental, or social value in local communities, with Cambodia being the target market. With growing discourse among consumers on how products affect the environment, and the role corporations can play in shaping a sustainable future, the challenge was particularly relevant. Finalists were paired into teams of two from different markets to foster cross-cultural understanding. The finalist teams then pitched their idea to a panel of judges made up of Singapore's leading entrepreneurs and small business owners.

"As we celebrate the 20th year of the FedEx/JA International Trade Challenge, we are proud of the lasting impact the program has had on thousands of young people across Asia Pacific. What began as an initiative to introduce students to international trade has evolved into a platform that develops entrepreneurial thinking, cross-cultural collaboration, and real-world problem-solving skills. The talent, creativity, and global mindset demonstrated by this year's finalists give us great confidence in the next generation of business leaders," said Salil Chari, president, Asia Pacific, FedEx.

The first-place winners were Team Ascent, consisting of Farra Santoso (Indonesia) and Harry Jang (South Korea). They impressed the judges with their innovative idea of a lightweight thermal shield made from recycled industrial packaging. Designed for Cambodia's hot climate, it reduces heat entering existing buildings without electricity, helping lower factory energy costs, protect workers from heat, and reduce waste.

The two runner-up teams were Team Baksei, comprising Masato Hirozane (Japan) and Sara Nileschkumar Jasani (Malaysia), who developed a solution that transforms discarded soft-plastic packaging into durable, flood-resilient permeable tiles. Team Ventra, consisting of Minette Cabaluna (Philippines) and Rayden Cleverson Suhardi (Indonesia), proposed a modular cooling solution made from recycled plastic waste that helps reduce indoor temperatures without electricity.



L-R: Asheesh Advani (President and CEO of JA Worldwide), Erin Sawyer (Chief People Development Officer, JA Worldwide), Julia Khong (Managing Director, Communications - Asia Pacific at FedEx), Dr Vivek Kumar (President and CEO of JA Asia Pacific), Third place winners - Rayden Cleverson Suhardi (Indonesia) and Minette Cabaluna (Philippines), Second place winners - Masato Hirozane (Japan) and Sara Nileschkumar Jasani (Malaysia), First place winners - Harry Jang (South Korea) and Farra Santoso (Indonesia), Grand Final Judges - Dr. Hsien-Hsien Lei (CEO of AmCham Singapore), Dr Neo Kok Beng (Founder and CEO of NEO Aeronautics), Thaddeus Koh (Co-Founder, E27 | Optimatic), and Patrick Lim (CEO of ACE.SG)

"Winning the 2026 FedEx/JA International Trade Challenge has been an unforgettable experience. Working with teammates from different markets challenged us to think beyond our own perspectives and develop solutions that could succeed on a global scale. Throughout the competition, we learned how international trade, sustainability, technology, and cultural understanding come together to solve real business challenges. Being part of the program's 20th anniversary year makes this achievement even more

meaningful, and we are grateful for the opportunity to learn from industry leaders and connect with talented students from across the region,” said Farra Santoso (Indonesia) and Harry Jang (South Korea), members of the winning team.

“These winners, and indeed all the 48 finalists, represent the very best of the impact that the FedEx/JA International Trade Challenge was designed to achieve: young people with bold ideas, the courage to collaborate across cultures, and the ability to turn classroom learning into real-world business solutions. As the program marks its 20th year, their achievement is a powerful reminder that the future of trade and entrepreneurship in Asia Pacific is already taking shape in the hands of our youth,” said Vivek Kumar, President and Chief Executive Officer of JA Asia Pacific.

The finals introduced several new elements to commemorate the program’s 20th year. For the first time, the event launched a report of findings from a region-wide youth survey that gathered more than 4,200 responses across 10 Asia Pacific markets, providing valuable insights into workplace readiness, entrepreneurial capability, global trade literacy, and perceptions of artificial intelligence. In addition, alumni from across the program’s 20-year history gathered to support the finalists of this year’s event, creating meaningful connections between past and present participants while demonstrating the program’s enduring impact.

FedEx believes that investing in mentorship is essential to empowering the next generation of leaders to thrive. In addition to the prizes, the 2026 APAC winners will receive an exclusive opportunity to deepen their understanding of global commerce through visits to FedEx operational facilities in their respective markets and direct engagement with FedEx team members. This immersive experience will provide valuable insights into logistics, supply chain management, and international trade, complementing the entrepreneurial skills developed through the program.

The FedEx/JA International Trade Challenge is jointly organized by FedEx and JA Asia Pacific, a Member of JA Worldwide. Now in its 20th year, the program has empowered more than 54,000 students across Asia Pacific through a blend of classroom learning, entrepreneurship education, and hands-on international business challenges. The program equips young people with practical skills in business, economics, global trade, teamwork, and problem-solving, helping prepare them for success in an increasingly interconnected global economy.

Judges of the competition, comprised of entrepreneurs and business leaders, were impressed by the organization of the competition and the efforts made by the youth.

Dr Neo Kok Beng, Founder and CEO, NEO Aeronautics

"Wonderful experience, a peek into our future leaders and I am impressed."

Rina Neoh, Co - Founder and Managing Partner, Ficus Capital

"Judging this competition was a privilege. These young people brought sharp ideas, honest effort, and a real willingness to learn exactly what the next generation of business leader's needs."

Dr. Hsien-Hsien Lei, CEO, The American Chamber of Commerce in Singapore

"I was motivated to take on the role of judge because we need to create safe spaces for young people to step out of their comfort zone, test ideas, and build confidence. Competitions like this give students a chance to think creatively, solve problems, think on their feet, and work with partners with different backgrounds, which are skills that will serve them well beyond the classroom."

As a judge, I wanted to offer useful feedback and encouragement. I also gained a lot from the experience seeing the capabilities of the next generation to have a tremendous impact on society. The students were thoughtful, organized and creative in the presentations. They leveraged all the tools available to them, created work that demonstrates their independent thinking and communicated their ideas clearly and with impact. They should be applauded for their courage, hard work and personal development. Be curious."

Pranjal Taneja, Founder and CEO, Gumtoo

"These students aren't just learning about business—they're demonstrating the problem-solving mindset and resilience that define true entrepreneurs. That's what will drive real change in the world."

Thaddeus Koh, Co-Founder, E27 (Optimatic)

"Always innovate in technology, business model and workflows."

Kriti Kapoor, Future of Work Strategist

"I was motivated to join the judging panel because I believe young people need opportunities to apply what they learn to real-world challenges. Throughout the competition, I was impressed by the students' creativity, customer insight, commercial thinking and confidence in presenting their ideas. The strongest teams combined a clear understanding of the problem with practical solutions, compelling storytelling and genuine collaboration."

My advice to aspiring entrepreneurs is to stay curious, listen closely to the people you hope to serve, and become comfortable learning through experimentation. Organizations such as FedEx and JA value people who can think critically, communicate clearly, work across cultures, use technology responsibly and remain resilient when their first idea does not work. The most optimistic moment for me was seeing how thoughtfully the students responded to questions and feedback. Their willingness to adapt, learn and improve showed that the next generation is ready to build businesses that create both economic value and positive social impact."