

Asia's rich lack succession plans as wealth nears \$129 trillion

Asian private wealth is projected to reach US\$99 trillion (\$129 trillion) by 2029, yet many of the region's wealthiest families are unprepared for the handover of their soaring fortunes, according to a report on Nov 11.

Nearly half of the region's first-generation wealth holders have not made proactive succession plans, according to research by UOB Private Bank, Boston Consulting Group (BCG) and the National University of Singapore.

They found that many make plans only when forced to, with 37 per cent waiting for a health crisis and 43 per cent acting only when business circumstances demand it.

The issue threatens more than just the family fortune, the report warns. Much of Asia's wealth remains tied to founder-led businesses. Chaotic handovers have the potential to freeze assets in legal disputes, fragment family empires, and destabilise companies that have grown rapidly but lack the governance structures that many Western dynasties built over generations.

The alternative to smooth succession is not just family drama: It is potential market disruption across the world's fastest growing wealth region.

"Imagine if you split the wealth evenly amongst all the children," said Mr Ernest Saudjana, head of Boston Consulting Group in South-east Asia. "Once you go through certain generations, the ownership becomes so fragmented that from a governance perspective, it's not very clear who is making the call on certain business decisions."

The report surveyed 228 high-net-worth individuals across seven Asian markets. While 91 per cent of the 46 family business founders want to keep leadership within the family, 28 per cent say their heirs are not interested and 24 per cent say their chosen successors are not prepared.

More than a third of founders still make all wealth decisions alone, and 28 per cent have not disclosed their wills to anyone.

Asian private wealth has jumped from 6 per cent of the global total 25 years ago to 21 per cent today, according to data from BCG. Singapore pulled in US\$765 billion in wealth inflows between 2019 and 2024, while Hong Kong attracted US\$975 billion. More than 80 per cent of that is coming from within Asia.

But the researchers warn that without better succession planning, much of that wealth could erode through disputes and poor transitions, which risks turning Asia's wealth creation story into a cautionary tale. BLOOMBERG