

Harnessing human resources

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HARNESSING HUMAN RESOURCES

Opening address by TUAN HAJI SHA'ARI TADIN. Senior Parliamentary Secretary. Ministry of Culture. Republic of Singapore.

It gives me great pleasure to be with you at this Study Seminar which is of significance to the mass media in this part of the world. This is the first real opportunity for journalists in the ASEAN region to get together to ponder on the subject of "Development Communication", although the subject by itself is not a new concept.

It is obvious that the mass media have great potential in influencing attitudes and opinions and in bringing about change. Hence, the need for the mass media to be involved in the overall development efforts of ASEAN countries cannot be stressed enough. But experience in many countries has shown that too often there is a practical failure to realise the importance of development communications and as a consequence the human factor is not given sufficient emphasis in the drive for social and economic modernisations.

It is a fact, for example, that except in government-run communication projects, there has been too little accent on gearing communication channels towards assisting development efforts in the economic, social and cultural fields.

It is heartening to note that planners themselves are now becoming more and more aware of the need to regard communication as an important component of the development process. The need to take the human factor into account in any planning is now receiving greater attention and there is an increasing realisation that one of the most effective means of harnessing human resources is perhaps through mass communications.

The ideal situation is one where media organisations, being realistically aware of the problems of national development, would be prepared to contribute their mite towards achieving the goals of development.

Assuming that all media organisations are fully mobilised for the overall tasks of national development, the practical question is how well equipped are journalists in handling this task. How many journalists are there in the region who have the expertise to translate social, economic and cultural developments into terms that could easily be understood by the masses?

Perhaps, journalists in the Asean region could re-think their roles and formulate modules which could further enhance the broad spectrum of development, both nationally and within the region as a whole.

This seminar will undoubtedly provide a useful background for the exchange of views and throw up new ideas for discussion to enable journalists from the Asean region to formulate programmes so that the mass media could act as the vital catalyst in the overall development process. As such, I have no doubt that this seminar is worthwhile and timely and that participants will come up with concrete suggestions which communicators in the developing world may adopt in their efforts to use mass communication channels in the service of national and regional development.

It gives me great pleasure now to declare open this Study Seminar on "Development Communication".