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Speech

By

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***Speech by Dr. Thanu Kulachol, the President of Bangkok University
on the Opening of the Seminar on
New Communication Technologies, Women and Democracy
at DeVille Palace Hotel, Bangkok
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It is my great pleasure to welcome all of you here to Bangkok, and I would like to thank the Asian Mass Communication Research and Information Centre for providing me this honorable opportunity to address the seminar to the very distinguished scholars and media practitioners from the Asia-Pacific region.

The topic of the seminar, New Communication Technologies, Women and Democracy, carries very meaningful messages. As we are now entering the era of new communication technologies, it is great to know that there are people who have been concerned with the potential of communication technologies in social and cultural development at both micro and macro levels.

The sexual discrimination, the inequality of opportunities, the poverty, the exploitation of human labor, the violation of human rights are some of the problems that people, especially women, have endured for centuries. And these problems cannot be solved in one day. However, there has been a great recognition about the crucial role of education and information as a potential solution for lessening the gap between the haves and the have-nots, the rich and the poor, the advantages and the disadvantages, and more importantly, between males and females.

Women in contemporary societies are exposed to a constant flow of information through various channels of mass communication. Television, newspapers, magazines, and radio routinely link millions of women with many aspects of social reality beyond the reach of their personal experience. Indeed, in some areas of life, their only experience of events and reality is mediated, either by the mass media or through informal interpersonal networks. In the political realm especially, their dependence on the news media is vitally complete. They rarely witness political events, decisions, or actions firsthand. With new communication technologies, mass media have played an important roles not only in educating and informing them to learn about politics, but also in motivating them to think about politics more systematically and more reasonably. Communication technology is; therefore, considered a major

element to promote female political participation in democracy as we move toward the knowledge-based society.

With the aims to assess the impact of the new communication technologies on women in Asia, to examine the relationship between the new communication technologies and democracy, to explore how new communication technologies can uplift the status of women and promote women's participation in democratic processes, and to formulate actionable recommendations on the issues identified during the seminar, I hope that the seminar will serve as an arena for fruitful discussion which will immensely benefit communication and informational technology fields, and can serve as a guideline for our national development.

On behalf of Bangkok University and Asian Mass Communication Research and Information Centre, I would like to express our deep appreciation to our honoured guest speakers and participants whose generous contributions have made this seminar possible.