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AMIC Secretary-General, Vijay Menon's Introductory Remarks at the Opening of the Seminar on "Media and National Unity", Bangalore, India, 26 May 1992.

I bring you greetings and good wishes from the Chairman and Committee and members of the AMIC Secretariat in Singapore.

I am glad to be back in Bangalore, after a lapse of some years, to participate in another meaningful seminar. On my last visit, the topic of the seminar was Communication Development and Human Rights in Asia. That resulted in a book. I am confident that this series of Indian seminars will be equally productive.

AMIC was founded in 1971 in Singapore with the support of the FES and the Government of Singapore, as a non-profit organization to serve the cause of mass communication in the Asia-Pacific. We still number the FES and the Government of Singapore among our supporters, who now include the Governments of Bangladesh, Indonesia, Nepal and Sri Lanka. But, unfortunately, not the Government of India.

AMIC aims to foster the exchange of ideas, information and experience and to aid in the development of skills, so that the potential of mass communication as an instrument for development is more fully realized, by all the countries in the region.

AMIC's membership, institutional and individual, extends to about 45 countries around the world. India has the distinction of having the largest number of members from any one country. The members have the reputation of being perhaps the most articulate. And they are supported by an energetic representative in Mr. Rajan, and a persuasive Committee Member in Mr. Kurian. So, you can see why we take a special interest in India!

We have a number of activities in India. In the current year, we will have four workshops in Ahmedabad, Delhi, Hyderabad and, possibly, Calcutta. We plan to bring out a book on Mass Media Laws and Regulations in India and as many as three research projects have an Indian segment. India will also be a member of AMIC's regional documentation network spanning 11 countries.

It was in response to suggestions from our members, endorsed by Mr. Rajan and Mr. Kurian, that the AMIC Committee decided to expand the network of honorary representatives. An expanded network calls for expanded activities and so we have this series of seminars on a topic of relevance and significance to the country.

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We have recently held Consultations on Press Systems in the Asean and SAARC countries. We have had a Seminar on The Role of the Media in a National Crisis, and we are currently carrying out a 3-country study on The Role of the Media in Ethnic Conflict Resolution. So, the theme of today's seminar, almost suggested itself.

Last December, I planned a very brief holiday in New Delhi. The weather was bracing and the flowers were in bloom. But what made the holiday truly enjoyable was my meeting with Dr. Bongartz of the FES. He appreciated our choice of theme and readily agreed to support two seminars this year. I am happy that he has been able to join us today. He represents an outstanding organization. And he has taken an active interest in this seminar and provided more than the customary support of a sponsoring agency. It is through his good offices that we have our Keynote Speaker, Mr. Upendra, with us today.

I met Mr. Upendra about two years ago at a meeting of the Asia-Pacific Broadcasting Union in Delhi. He was then Minister for Information and Broadcasting. Despite the political uncertainty, the prevailing rumours and tension, Mr. Upendra did an excellent job of allaying, by word and deed, the apprehensions of the several hundred delegates, from around the world. I am sure his experience and insights will be a valuable input to this seminar.

Our Consultation in Jakarta on Press Systems in Asean provided some interesting insights into the thinking that animates the Press in those countries. Indonesia lays stress on the Pancasila philosophy with its accent on national unity, consensual democracy and social justice. Malaysia's national ideology, *Rukunegara* stresses national unity, democracy, social equity, progressive thought and traditional culture. Singapore has also adopted a national ideology or a set of core values which stress community, family, consensus and tolerance.

Almost all the Asean countries are sensitive about press coverage of ethnic, religion, racial and inter-group conflicts. At the Consultation, participants identified the primary functions of the Asean press as supporting nation-building, political stability, national development and social justice, promoting regional cohesion and social harmony, moulding national identity, information and education, and exercising self-restraint, in racial, ethnic and religious matters.

These few observations will, hopefully, provide some food for thought in the course of our discussions.

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