

AMIC Annual Conference on Skyways, Highways
and Corridors : Asia's Communication Challenges,
Kuala Lumpur, June 19-21, 1997 (vol. 2) :
[summary and evaluation]

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SUMMARY AND EVALUATION

236 delegates, including 46 speakers from 22 countries participated in AMIC's Sixth Annual Conference on June 19-21, 1997 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Acting Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim of Malaysia who inaugurated the conference said " the theme reflects the transformation in our thinking with regard to information and culture and how the imperative of technology has rendered old thinking irrelevant."

In his speech, Mr. Ibrahim stressed that Asia's culture industry must now grow from infancy to maturity. " Not only is censorship outmoded, but technology has made it virtually impossible for any government to exercise control over information dissemination," he pointed out.

He said that " people cannot be blamed for preferring foreign cultural products because these materials are intellectually stimulating and culturally uplifting while ours continue to cater to banal, cheap and pedestrian tastes."

Tan Sri Kamarul Ariffin, executive chairman of Kumpulan Utusan, AMIC's local partner in organizing the three-day conference gave the opening remarks and cited the dynamics in the media industry that saw advertising and circulation either going up or down in the various regions of the world.

He called on the conference delegates to examine diligently the myriad issues that impact on the communication industry in the region.

Mr. Vijay Menon, AMIC's secretary-general, in his welcome remarks cited the critical role that AMIC plays in "disseminating information and knowledge and in activating a spirit of social dynamism in the less affluent and less developed parts of the region. He added that AMIC has pursued the development of professional skills so that the potential of communication for socio-economic development is realized by all the countries in the region.

He thanked Acting Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim for inaugurating the opening session, Utusan Melayu for its invaluable support as a major sponsor and local partner, eight companies and advertisers for their assistance and other local and regional organizations, as well as the conference speakers and participants.

In an evaluation of the three-day conference, a majority of the participants rated the meeting highly in terms of organization, facilities, presentation by resource persons, opportunities for exchanging ideas with fellow participants and speakers, relevance of conference to their respective work and overall quality of the programme (see Table 1).

The plenary and parallel sessions received high marks from the respondents. They were very informative, stimulating and comprehensive, although some could have been improved with the use of audio-visual aids (see Table 2).

Some 31 proposed topics were recommended for the next AMIC conference, among them, conflicts of the future, print vs electronic media, using IT to enhance Asian media, the future of radio and religious communication.

The participants' profile showed that more than 50% belonged to academe, and more than 10% each to the print and research sectors. Malaysia and the Philippines had the biggest representation while Singapore and Australia came next (Table 4). Of those who registered, forty five percent (45%) were AMIC members.

A questionnaire on conference particulars such as registration fees, conference frequency and institutionalization of pre-conference seminars was distributed to participants on the last day.

The results indicated that a majority of the participants want to hold the AMIC conference annually, limited to three days. They found the registration fee reasonable although they would have still preferred a fee within the US\$250-350 range. Most of the students/participants found the fee expensive. A majority would want the pre-conference seminars institutionalized (see Table 5)