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Harmoko, H. E.

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By

H Harmoko

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MINISTER OF INFORMATION
REPUBLIC OF INDONESIA

ADDRESS BY
THE MINISTER OF INFORMATION
OF THE REPUBLIC OF INDONESIA
ON THE OCCASION OF THE AMIC MEETING
IN JAKARTA, AUGUST 23, 1988

Excellencies,

Mr. Secretary General of AMIC,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is indeed with great pleasure that I have accepted to make a few remarks at the opening of the Consultation on the press system in the ASEAN countries here in Jakarta this morning.

First of all, I wish to congratulate AMIC (the Asian Mass Communication Research and Information Centre) which is based in Singapore headed by Mr. Vijay Menon, its Secretary General, for taking the initiative to organize this conference. It is a timely initiative indeed, particularly since ASEAN nations have become closer and closer in their relations, as events in the region have proven.

The successful Third ASEAN Summit Conference which took place in Manila a few months ago has marked

as a significant milestone in the progress of cooperation among the six ASEAN nations in the various fields and endeavors, particularly in the economic, socio-cultural, political and other areas.

The recent meeting among the ASEAN Foreign Ministers in Bangkok last month preparing for the Jakarta Informal Meeting demonstrated the continuous common concern and common endeavor as well as solidarity among ASEAN nations on important matters affecting our region such as the Cambodia problem.

As we all know, the Jakarta Informal Meeting has received wide coverage by the domestic, regional and international press.

In any important event which affects our region, the media, be it the electronic media as well as the press, always plays a very significant role in informing the whole world about the events that took place.

Our region, the ASEAN region, has increasingly become more and more important not only to the peoples and nations in the region but to the eye of the other nations of the world as well, big and small.

A region with some 300 million population

with vast resources and territories strategically located between two strategic oceans, the Pacific and the Indian Oceans, has to be reckoned with by all nations of the world.

Considering the increasing importance of our region, it is only natural if the ASEAN nations also develop a better understanding about the various press system that exist within the respective ASEAN countries.

ASEAN as a regional cooperation inspite of the differences in the historical background, political system, socio-cultural and socio-economical aspirations of each member countries is now Internationally acknowledged as successful. A certain degree of stability in all aspects of life in ASEAN is prevailing and I am positive that we all are aware that to a certain extent the press in ASEAN, in this case the National ones, are responsible for this favourable condition.

That is why, the initiative undertaken by AMIC was enthusiastically welcomed by our Department of Information, in this case, the Directorate General for Press and Graphics, which has acted as a co-sponsor of this Consultation on the press system in ASEAN countries.

Because of the variety of the press system, it is desirable that we in ASEAN make a special effort to learn and understand these system thoroughly. Thereby we should be able to benefit from the experiences, the success as well as the failures of each other, as we individually and collectively move on towards further progress.

Experience, as the proverb says, is the best teacher.

To discuss the press system in the ASEAN member countries does not mean to intervene in the ASEAN press itself. By knowing in depth the respective press system in the respective member countries we strengthen the reason for the existence of the press itself. More than that the press in ASEAN is expected to function in improving the educational level of our peoples in ASEAN and at the same time help improve their prosperity.

Another positive impact expected from the ASEAN press is to help create a region which is peaceful, free and neutral (ZOPFAN). By so doing the press in ASEAN help to create the national resilience of the respective ASEAN member countries, while warding off the negative reports that hamper the stability in the

ASEAN region.

In that spirit, may I also use this opportunity to inform you, that Indonesia has taken the initiative to hold a conference of ASEAN Ministers of Information sometime in December of this year.

This conference is expected to provide an opportunity for the ASEAN Ministers of Information to get to know each other better and to exchange views on matters of common interest in the field of information in our ASEAN region.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As I understand it, today you will be discussing about the press system in each of the six ASEAN countries, while tomorrow you will have a rather comprehensive discussion on three topics, namely : the Legal and Philosophical Tenets of the ASEAN press system; the Role and Responsibility of the ASEAN press; and the Balance Between Freedom and Responsibility.

These are very interesting and challenging topics, indeed.

As developing nations, we in ASEAN are continuously developing a more solid foundation for our

respective press system, as we improve daily through trial and error.

That is why the sharing of experience and knowledge on the various press system that exist in ASEAN would indeed be very useful.

Allow me to point out the conviction of the ASEAN journalist members of the CAJ (Confederation of ASEAN Journalists) that can be used as input to this discussion. This is stated in the constitution of CAJ amongst others as follows :

- a). The promotion of healthy, free and responsible press, the advancement of the cause of journalism, and the forging of closer relations among journalists in the ASEAN countries and other countries.
- b). The promotion of better understanding among peoples of the region in order to attain prosperity, social justice and peace.
- c). The articulation of the aspirations, sentiments, affairs and interests of countries of this region in order that they would be better understood and appreciated by other peoples of the world.

We can not discuss the press system without considering the aspirations of the journalists themselves. For the journalists as participants in the press activities play an important role, and I dare say the main role. The constitution of CAJ clearly is a proof that the ASEAN journalist have since 1975 been active in improving the press system in ASEAN.

As far as Indonesia is concerned, as you all know, our press system is based upon the national ideology, the Pancasila. The political system itself is based upon the Pancasila ideology. The press system is therefore a sub-system of the national political system.

The Indonesian press has a role and responsibility to make national development a success, just as other components in the national society also possess similar role and responsibility.

I am sure you will hear more about the Indonesian press system as the Indonesian participants in this conference elaborate on this subject further during your deliberation.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In this modern technological and communica-

tion era, the media, particularly the press, has a fascinating role and responsibility to play, and a noble contribution to make towards mankind.

Without the press, and the other media such as television and radio, the whole world be kept in the dark regarding happenings that mankind ought to know.

I have no doubt that all of us are aware of this universal fact.

As regards the national press in the ASEAN countries, there is one other important and ideal dimension, namely that it also has a very noble mission to contribute towards the strengthening of the solidarity and unity among the ASEAN nations.

Furthermore, besides its normal function as provider of news to the general public, the national press in the ASEAN countries should, I think, increase its role in informing the world about the positive achievements that take place in the national development of each of the ASEAN nations as well as the achievements of the ASEAN itself in various fields.

Considering the interesting challenge as well as the bright prospects and opportunities that are ahead of the ASEAN press in our region, I hope that

your discussion on these various topics would be exciting and fruitful during your deliberation.

For the non-Indonesian guests that have come from our neighbouring countries, may I wish you a pleasant stay in Jakarta.

Finally, it is my privilege and pleasure to now declare the Consultation on the press systems in ASEAN countries open.

Thank you.

Jakarta, August 23, 1988
MINISTER OF INFORMATION
REPUBLIC OF INDONESIA



H. HARMOKO