

AMIC-BERNAMA-WACC Seminar on  
Communication Challenges in Asia : Kuala  
Lumpur, Nov 21-22, 1985 : [welcome address]

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**Welcome Address**

**By**

**Vijay Menon**

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Welcome Address by the Secretary-General of AMIC, Mr. Vijay Menon,  
at the inauguration of the Bernama-WACC-AMIC Seminar on "Current  
Communication Challenges", Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, November 21-22, 1985

Hon. Minister of Information, Distinguished Participants, Ladies  
and Gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you all on behalf of AMIC, the Asian Mass Communication Research and Information Centre, to the inauguration of the first of the series of seminars we plan to hold on Current Communication Challenges. To the Hon. Minister, I would like to express our collective appreciation of his gracious gesture in accepting our invitation.

The idea for this series of seminars emerged during a discussion with Mr. Neville Jayaweera of the WACC. We are delighted that he is here today. We are also gratified that Bernama readily agreed to cosponsor this seminar.

It is singularly appropriate that the first seminar on Current Communication Challenges is being held in Kuala Lumpur. Appropriate because Kuala Lumpur was the venue in 1979 of the Intergovernmental Conference on Communication Policies in Asia and Oceania when it was agreed that every effort should be made to eliminate the many obstacles impeding the exchange and circulation of information. And that every effort be made to ensure that the mass media contribute to the strengthening of peace and international understanding and the promotion of progress and development. The conference also called for a reduction of existing imbalances as well as current disparities in the facilities available for communication both within the countries and between countries.

Many initiatives have been launched since the Kuala Lumpur conference. National news agencies in the region have strengthened their organisations and invested in the latest technology. There is no finer example of this than Bernama. Simultaneously, much time and thought and effort

- contd. -

- 2 -

have gone into strengthening of the regional news network. The Organisation of Asia-Pacific News Agencies (OANA) and the Asian News Network (ANN) bear testimony to these efforts.

Commendable as the progress is, much more remains to be done. It is acknowledged today that communication development is the key to economic development, especially in the dawning information age. A recent report has pointed out that international trade in information-communication products and services has become an essential factor in world trade. The world communication-information market for 1980 has been valued at US\$350 million, about 18 per cent of total world trade.

It is in the light of these developments that the MacBride Report asserted, "There is no longer any room for uncertainty either about the role that communication should play in economic planning, nor about its place in development strategy, nor about the need for resources that should be devoted to it-by every nation and by the international community".

It is a matter for regret that this report and the recommendations it put forward have been the subject of acrimonious debate, a veritable dialogue of the deaf. It is our hope that over the next two days our galaxy of distinguished participants will bring to bear on these issues academic objectivity and the cold light of reason and thereby contribute to a fruitful discussion and provide directions for the future.

And now a few words about AMIC. The Asian Mass Communication Research and Information Centre was founded in 1971 with the joint support of the Government of Singapore and the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, an independent foundation in the Federal Republic of Germany. AMIC began as a regional documentation centre which, with the encouragement of Unesco, sought to disseminate information pertaining to mass communication. Today, AMIC acts as an independent foundation, charged with the responsibility of raising the standards of

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- 3 -

teaching, training, research and the practice of mass communication in the region. It meets this responsibility through a publication and research programme, by offering consultancy services, by organising refresher courses and by convening conferences and seminars. All this, I might add, with the cooperation and goodwill of ladies and gentlemen like yourselves who have consistently extended to us support and cooperation that have made it possible for us to expand the range and volume of our activities.

We are most grateful to the Hon. Minister for inaugurating this seminar and to all of you, our distinguished guests, for giving us the pleasure and the encouragement of your presence.

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