

# AMIC-IFRA-Brabdry Technical Conference for Newspapers : Singapore, Dec 4-6, 1995 : [welcome address]

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ANPE Technical Conference, 5-7 December 1995  
Welcome Address by Vijay Menon, Secretary-General,  
Asian Mass Communication Research & Information Centre(AMIC)

It gives me great pleasure to welcome all of you, on behalf of the co-chairmen and members of the Technical Programme Advisory Committee, to the Technical Conference of the Asian Newspaper Publishers Expo.

Roger Fidler, who formerly headed the Knight-Ridder Laboratory in the US, sees newspapers being able to incorporate full motion, sound and transactional capabilities with advertisers, by the end of the decade. On his last visit to Singapore, he showed us the flat panel display, or portable information appliance, that he believes will eventually blend the best attributes of the newspaper and video.

The Economist of the UK, which takes a slightly more cynical view of developments in the United States, says that all the excited talk about information superhighways has put the wind up many in America's newspaper business. Fear of the unknown rather than the lure of media profit is the driving force.

Jeremy Tunstall, the British communications guru, believes that the new media revolution comes sandwiched between two other media revolutions: of the old media, such as newspapers and conventional television, and a revolution in media policy. He is confident that the old media will remain an important force over both.

Nowhere in the world is the 'old media', represented by the press, more dynamic than in Asia. Shortly, the Asia Times will make its debut, from printing sites in Bangkok, Hong Kong and Singapore. A year or more ago, The Asian Age was launched with editions from New Delhi, Bombay and London -- and more in Asia to follow. Hong Kong's Apple Daily has made history of sorts with a circulation of 300,000 within six months of its launch. And it plans to spend HK\$950 million to take its printing in-house from 1997. The South China Morning Post has a new HK\$670 million head office and printworks. There are reports of substantial investments by newspapers in Bangkok and Colombo, Jakarta, Kuala Lumpur and New Delhi. And Vietnam will soon see the launch of its first business daily. The signs are overwhelmingly positive.

The prospects are no less promising. The trends in Asia point to growing urbanization, higher levels of literacy, increasing affluence and rising newspaper circulation. The annual survey of world newspaper trends presented at the FIEJ World Newspaper Congress in May 1995, revealed a general picture of circulation decline in the EU, Japan and the US. However, several countries in Asia, including India, Malaysia and Singapore, showed "strong readership growth and some equally strong performances in advertising".

The Asian Newspaper Publishers Expo is clearly the right event, at the right place and at the right time. By combining a business conference, technical conference, exhibition and user group meetings, ANPE has provided a comprehensive package for the region. AMIC, which serves as IFRA's Asian partner, was happy to extend its collaboration to Bradbury (International) Services in co-organizing and sponsoring the Technical Conference. Mr. Roland Lau and I, as Co-chairmen of the Technical Programme

Advisory Committee (TPAC, for short), benefited from the advice and assistance of representatives of some of Asia's leading newspapers: Mr. Cyril Pereira of the South China Morning Post, Hong Kong and Mr. Murali of the Hindu, India; Mr. Steven Tan of Star Newspapers, Malaysia and Mr. Gerald Tunggono of PT Gramedia/Kompas Daily, Indonesia; Mr. Pang-Mau Liu of China Times, Hongkong and Mr. Takuji Kadono of Asahi Shimbun, Japan and, above all, <sup>my</sup>own colleague, Thomas Jacob. Bill Burris provided valuable back up and Harald von Gottberg of IFRA helped from the sidelines!

So, the programme is indeed one developed in Asia for Asia's newspaper industry. The format is designed for maximum communication and interactivity. We are grateful to the speakers and panel discussants for responding to our requests with encouraging enthusiasm and admirable promptness.

Finally, a brief word about AMIC for the many who are unfamiliar with our organization. AMIC is a non-profit, mass communication centre serving Asia from its secretariat in Singapore. We are supported by the Government of Singapore and the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung of Germany. In the 24 years since our founding in 1971 we have organized over 350 seminars and workshops across the region. Our Press Development Programme, established in 1992, works closely with IFRA to familiarize newspapers in Asia with technological developments around the world.

Next year, in 1996, we will celebrate our 25th anniversary. This programme is, I believe, the finest possible curtain raiser.