

This document is downloaded from DR-NTU, Nanyang Technological University Library, Singapore.

Title	Consultation on Press Systems in Asean : Jarkarta, 23-26 August, 1988 : [welcome address]
Author(s)	Menon, Vijay
Citation	
Date	1988
URL	http://hdl.handle.net/10220/1021
Rights	

Welcome Address

By

Vijay Menon

①

1213
Singapore
(101)

WELCOME ADDRESS BY MR VIJAY MENON, SECRETARY-GENERAL, ASIAN MASS COMMUNICATION RESEARCH AND INFORMATION CENTRE (AMIC), SINGAPORE AT THE CONSULTATION ON "PRESS SYSTEMS IN ASEAN", JAKARTA, INDONESIA, AUGUST 23-26, 1988

Your Excellency, Hon'ble Minister for Information, Your Excellencies the Asean Ambassadors to Indonesia, the Director-General of Press and Graphics, Distinguished Guests and Participants, ladies and gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to welcome all of you to this Consultation on "Press Systems in Asean" organised jointly by the Directorate-General, Press and Graphics of the Department of Information, Republic of Indonesia, and the Asian Mass Communication Research and Information Centre, AMIC as we are better known.

The need to re-examine the role and responsibility of the press in Asean has been articulated by several senior members of the region's governments in recent times.

Last year, Singapore's Minister for Trade and Industry explained that "values systems or political structures cannot be transplanted from different societies, take root in a totally different environment, and solve problems for which they had never been designed". He asserted, "no single system of government can suit every nation, and no single model of the press can serve the purposes of every society."

Early this year, the Malaysian Education Minister said that "the biggest obstacle to the media development of Asian countries was the 'cultural domination' of alien values and standards perpetuated mostly through the electronic and print media".

Our keynote speaker today, the Hon'ble Minister, in a speech almost three years ago said that "the press, in the exercise of their freedom to write, should not forsake their responsibility to continue to stimulate the public's optimism with a view to enhancing the chances of success in their development efforts."

The differing perceptions of the role of the press as between the West and Asia are not confined to ministers but are also shared by the region's journalists. At the Asia-Pacific Conference of the International Federation of Journalists in Hong Kong last year, an Asean journalist "proposed an Asian model of journalism in which the press worked with the government to build a national consensus."

He said that the "western-style press freedom which stressed confrontation with the authorities was not in harmony with the traditional Asian values and milieu. The role of the press in developing countries was to promote team work which was necessary for political development and nation-building."

Another Asean delegate shared this view. He said that "the national press should be an instrument of national development and nation-building, and must support development efforts."

It is clear that any scale of values based on western press theories cannot be automatically applied to Asia. Indigenous philosophies have a greater bearing on press systems in the region. It is a widely shared feeling among communication scholars and practitioners that there is need to re-examine western theories and practices in the light of Asian cultures and traditions.

When the Third Asean Editors' Conference met in Bali last October, the Director-General for Press and Graphics presented a paper on 'The Pancasila Press System'. It was an interesting paper as it discussed the Pancasila philosophy and its constitutional foundations, the basic principles of the Pancasila press system and its contribution to universal press systems. This opened up some interesting possibilities for further inquiry and activity and so, we are all here today, to look at the historical background and at the legal and philosophical tenets of the press systems in the region, to examine the role and responsibility of the press and the balance between freedom and responsibility.

The officials, journalists and academics we approached were both prompt and positive in their response. The Hon'ble Minister graciously consented to inaugurate the Consultation. We can therefore look forward to some fruitful discussions which will, hopefully, contribute to a better understanding of the philosophy that animates the press and the role of the press in the context of the cultural and political realities of the region.

For the benefit of those who are unfamiliar with our organisation, I would like to explain that AMIC was established in 1971 in Singapore as a non-profit organisation focusing on mass communication in the region. Although it began as a regional documentation centre, AMIC has expanded the scope of its activities to include publications, research, training and consultancy services.

AMIC conducts training programmes, seminars and workshops throughout Asia for the benefit of media professionals, communication planners and policy-makers. The primary focus of its activities has been in the Asean region where since 1972, AMIC has conducted 96 seminars and workshops covering various communications issues facing the region.

What is most gratifying to us is the support that we are privileged to receive from within the region and outside. The

Government of Singapore and the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung have helped us since our inception. The Asia Foundation, for instance, is supporting this and several other projects. The Hon'ble Minister, Mr. Harmoko, I am proud to say, has long been a source of active encouragement. But our thanks also go to our participants -- officials, professionals and scholars -- who have readily agreed to give us the benefit of their time and thoughts so that this might be a fruitful meeting.

Our most recent publication is titled "Communication Theory: The Asian Perspectives". In the Introduction, Dr. Wimal Dissanayake, a distinguished scholar, has this to say: Culture is communication and communication is culture. Asian nations could not have possibly created such magnificent cultures if they had not also subscribed to and nurtured certain distinct approaches to communication. Modern communication scholars, in both the East and the West, need to rediscover and re-examine these approaches with a view to finding out how relevant they are to our concerns". These words have a direct bearing on and relevance to the theme of our consultation.

Honourable Chief Guest and all our other distinguished guests, I would like to thank you on behalf of the sponsors and the participants, for giving us your blessings and encouragement by your presence here this morning. I will now request His Excellency, the Minister of Information, to deliver his address and then inaugurate this meeting.

* * *