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Welcome Address

By

Vijay Menon

Conference on "Communication, Culture and Development

Jakarta, Indonesia, June 22 - 24, 1995

Welcome Address by Vijay Menon, Secretary-General, AMIC

I am delighted to welcome all of you, on behalf of the Asian Mass Communication Research and Information Centre, to our Fourth Annual Conference with the theme, "Communication, Culture and Development". The theme is timely and topical and very relevant to our region.

A recent newsletter of the International Telecommunications Union (5/95) mentioned that in the 90s information systems increased four times every three years. It predicted that by the end of this decade, children will have super computers on their desks at home.

That prediction is likely to go uncontested and unchallenged. We are being swept away by a technological tidal wave. The average individual can only watch -- bemused and, perhaps, a little bewildered.

As Peter Drucker has mentioned in *The New Realities*, a great deal is being written about the impact of the new information technologies on material civilization, on goods, services and businesses. The social impact are however important -- they may be more important.

Early this year, in February, jointly with the FES and the ABU, we organized a conference on the impact of new information technologies on broadcasting, national economies and social structures. Prof. William Melody pointed out in his keynote paper that seldom in our history has a subject -- he was referring to the information society -- attracted such attention yet yielded so little critical insight on its long-term implications.

Communication and information technologies are spoken of as if they are panaceas for all our prevailing ills. Yet, to quote Prof. Melody, if history has taught us anything it is that new technologies do not solve old social problems. They may significantly change power relations in society...But there is no magic embedded in new technologies that will suddenly and automatically transform the nature of social and institutional relations in beneficial ways.

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This conference seeks to understand and explore developments in communications, and to learn from the lessons of other countries and institutions. Over 40 speakers, in the course of 20 sessions, will help us in our efforts.

We are glad that this conference is being held in Jakarta. Indonesia has been a pioneer in satellite communications and it continues to be an innovator in broadcasting and telecommunication policies. We value our long and cordial association with the Department of Information. Today, we are happy to welcome H.E. Joop Ave, Minister for Tourism, Post and Telecommunications.

We are also grateful to UNESCO's ADG, CII, for joining us here today. He is the right man in the right place, at the right time.

Today's conference is only one of 22 such AMIC activities this year. In our 24 years, we have organized about 300 seminars and workshops. These have directly benefited more than 6,000 mass communicators, and many more through our publications, research and documentation activities. We must acknowledge the invaluable support of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung and the Government of Singapore, and the encouragement and assistance of partner institutions, such as MASTEL and ISKI for this conference.

We thank you, Hon. Minister, for joining us this morning to formally inaugurate this conference. Your presence will be a source of encouragement to all of us to work for the attainment of the conference objectives.

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