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Author(s)	Menon, Vijay
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**Welcome Address**

**By**

**Vijay Menon**

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CONFERENCE ON COMMUNICATIONS IN A CHANGING ASIA  
Manila, July 16-18, 1992

Welcome address by Vijay Menon, Secretary General, Asian Mass Communication Resource and Information Centre (AMIC), Singapore.

Secretary Reyes, Mr. Hadlow, ladies and gentlemen.

It gives me great pleasure to welcome all of you, on behalf of AMIC's Chairman and Committee to this Conference on "Communication in a Changing Asia". When we talk of Asia, we refer to a continent with over 3 billion people. We talk of countries whose population, income, education, and access to facilities, vary widely. Japan and Singapore have a phone for every 2.3 persons, while Nepal & Cambodia have one phone for every 686 and 790 people. In Japan and South Korea the literacy rates are 100% and 96%, while in Afghanistan and Nepal it is 29% and 26%. The disparities are enormous.

The people of Asia are confronted today with the winds and waves of change. Information technology in all its many forms, fibre optics and ISDN, desktop publishing and teleconferencing and, above all, cable and satellite television - these are the heralds of change, which no country, however poor or illiterate or isolated, can hope to escape. Privatization and liberalization represent another wave sweeping the continent, and sweeping away many cherished ideas and ideals.

In Singapore, for instance, the government has published IT 2,000, a plan to turn the republic into an intelligent island. It is expected that in just 15 years computers and television monitors will be one component inter-connecting every home, office, school and industry to provide access to a wide range of services.

All this is designed to enhance individual potential, improve the quality of life, and boost the economic engine. In short, communication is being used as a tool, a tool for development.

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This has essentially been the goal and purpose of AMIC's activities during the past 21 years -- to create an awareness and understanding of the potential of communication to promote development. And this is the underlying purpose of this seminar: to review trends and developments in communication in the region, to assess the impact of changes in the communication environment and to examine how the challenges and opportunities can be exploited.

We are most grateful to our speakers and chairpersons, to Secretary Rod Reyes and UNESCO's Regional Communication Adviser for Asia, Martin Hadlow for joining us at this conference. We are sure that their participation will help to enrich the proceedings. We are equally grateful to the Frederich Ebert Stiftung's Manila Office and to the San Miguel Corporation for sponsoring delegates from the Philippines, to Dr. Braid of the Asian Institute of Journalism and Dr. Teresa Stuart, our Philippine Representative for their efforts on our behalf and, my colleague, Dr. Victor Valbuena, for striving to ensure that this conference in Manila is not only successful but serves to encourage us to make this an annual event.

There was a cloud of uncertainty when we decided on Manila as the venue. We are glad that our faith has been vindicated. There has been a peaceful transition and, I am sure, all the delegates join me in wishing the new administration, represented by Secretary Reyes, and the people of the Philippines, progress and prosperity in the years ahead.