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Paper No. 4
Workshop on "Management of Change for Broadcasters"

Singapore, April 27 - May 2, 1998

Opening Address by Vijay Menon, Secretary-General, Asian Media Information and Communication Centre (AMIC), Singapore

It gives me great pleasure to welcome all of you to this Workshop on "Management of Change for Broadcasters", organized by the Deutsche Welle Radio Training Centre and AMIC.

Radio is the region’s pre-eminent medium in terms of reach and coverage, and changes, on-going and anticipated, are matters of considerable concern. This is, therefore, an important workshop and we are glad that we have a record number of 14 participating countries.

In physical terms, Radio has recorded remarkable growth in the last three decades. Take China, for instance. The number of radio sets in 1965 was 6 million. By 1982, the number had grown to 36 million. And, in 1997, our research shows that the number was almost 200 million. In India, the number of transmitters increased from 6 in 1947 to 293 in 1997. The number of radio sets in the region more than trebled in a single decade — from 102 million in 1982 to almost 350 million by 1991.

Today there are over 4,000 radio stations in Asia. Two-thirds of these are government owned or controlled, while a third is privately owned or operated. The audience is infinitely varied, whether seen from the standpoint of literacy or language, income or population. There is also the urban/rural divide. Add to these recent trends towards deregulation, advances in technology and shrinking finances and the picture becomes more complicated. The element of change, rapid and continuous, is making the situation even more complicated.

Our recent seminars have highlighted five major problems currently facing public service broadcasters in the region:

1. Credibility — the need to be SEEN to be independent and objective.
2. Funding — to invest in new technology and personnel.
3. Competition — resulting from deregulation, liberalization and privatization.
4. Audience Feedback — to remain relevant to the listener
5. Training — to maintain quality of output and to be entrepreneurial in the new environment.

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In 1993, at a Deutsche Welle - AMIC Workshop in Singapore on “Radio Broadcasting Management 2000: Programme Trends and Personnel Development”, Daniel Yun, then Vice-President, SBC Radio, said, “The salvation of radio in Asia is in learning from the experience of developed radio markets that have survived savage competition. The radio business is more than programming, marketing and sales. The engineering aspect, stronger signals for stations, upgrading of equipment to reduce unnecessary staffing, computerized traffic scheduling, and bookings to manage and maximize inventory, will all go to increased efficiency, productivity, staff morale and, most importantly, profitability.”

We are glad this workshop will benefit from the experience and expertise of the Deutsche Welle Radio Training Centre. During our partnership, stretching over two decades, we have come to appreciate and value the professionalism and thoroughness that DWRTC brings to bear on its programmes. And we have reason to be grateful for its invaluable contribution to broadcast training in Asia.

But, in the final analysis, the success of a workshop is measured by the benefits the participants derive from it. We would urge you to participate vigorously, to make this a truly interactive programme, so that we can, collectively and individually, look back on a professionally enriching and personally satisfying week.

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Reference: