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Keynote Address

By

H E Harmoto
Participants of the seminar,
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the first place, I wish you, all participants of the seminar, a hearty welcome. To the distinguished guests, particularly those representing the institutes of communication, mass media and universities from neighbouring countries in Asia-Pacific, I express my sincere appreciation of your presence in the seminar to jointly explore and study the problems of television developments in the Asia-Pacific region as designed in the topic of the seminar.

The topic of the seminar is very interesting and also very important to be studied for the benefit of the people, governments and organizers of mass media, particularly television. Furthermore, it was only a few weeks ago, the Asia-Pacific Economic Leaders' meeting was held in Bogor, thus the seminar is quite relevant to the spirit as reflected in the declaration of APEC.
The Bogor Declaration that was concluded from the APEC meeting is essentially an agreement to promote economic cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region in particular and in the world in general. To maintain such cooperation is by creating partnership, balance and equitable distribution due to the awareness that the growth rate and the power of economy among APEC members are varied.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In the eve of the year 2000, I can see three things, which will influence the direction of the growth and development of the TV broadcasting in the multicultural societies of Asia-Pacific Area, namely:

Firstly, the development of communication and information technology with all its inherent effects, either positive or negative.

Secondly, social process in which constant improvement of the intelligence of the people will demand better quality and quantity of the TV-Programmes, besides the anticipation that electronic mass media is expected to become media for promoting the indigenous capacity and human resources development.

Thirdly, the concept of responsibility, which demands a more concrete and comprehensive actualization of the universal values of freedom, peace, social justice and tolerance.

We should keep our attention focused on these phenomena, both for the development of the institutional, ideal, managerial and professional aspects of broadcasting promotion, as
well as for the need of the Public Broadcast to share responsibility for creating a better future.

Distinguished participants,

We are now going to elaborate in this seminar the impact of expanding transnational television due to the extensive of satellite. Regarding the technological aspect, we have to be fully aware of the accelerating technological convergence between telecommunications, computing, information products and services, and the confirmed progression towards a knowledge based society. The “means of communication” nowadays does not include mass media alone, but covers also the stores of information available in libraries, documentation centres and archives, published materials, scientific, technical and socio-economic databases and systems which contribute to the advancement of knowledge now accessible (or potentially accessible) through electronic technology, computer networks and telecommunications channels.

Regarding the social process, we have to consider the fact that the Asia-Pacific community is heterogeneous, consisting of various ethnic groups with different cultural, religious beliefs, and historical background. Complex community is undergoing changes in value system as consequence of development which in fact is a process of renewals in all sectors of life. Throughout this unique area, transnationalization of television programmes, especially in developing countries, have been introduced for many years through imported television programmes. Transnationalization also happens by means
of broadcast spill-over from neighbouring countries and the programmes to be broadcast via satellite. Depending on the national programme policy, by stages transnational programmes in national broadcasts will decrease in line with the increasing capability of production for local programmes.

In global era, television transnationalization is increasing. Business institutions in the field of television programmes production and broadcasting grow very fast. The problem that is necessary to be elaborated in this seminar is how to reduce the negative impact of transnational television. Transnational television broadcast is organized from some socio-cultural system, and in turn comes into another socio-cultural system of different characteristics.

In the context of television transnationalization, the control of media content is in the hand of broadcast organizers which operate television programme broadcasting in particular place or country. Speaking about television programme contents, we can not avoid to touch the concept of responsibility. We are aware that because of the enhancement of satellite technology, it is almost impossible for a country to protect her sky area from signals that bring television programmes. Therefore, appealing to the sense of conscience, self-restraint and self-regulation would be a more practical and effective approach. According to my opinion, public broadcasters are the 'trustees of society' under a form of an, unwritten 'social contract' to deliver useful, educational, informational and non-violent programmes to the audience. Public broadcasters everywhere in the world should
be strengthened as the principal means of counteracting imported TV violence. Coupled with this should be a reinforcement of the financial and technical means to improve and increase the national, indigenous television production. This would provide the public more attractive choices and ensure a real freedom of choice. In this modern day discussion of the impact of Transnational TV, Gandhi's words, spoken in quite another context, are still highly relevant:
"I do not want my house to be walled in on all sides and my windows to be stuffed. I want the cultures of all lands to be blown about my house as freely as possible. But I refuse to be blown off my feet by any".

Distinguished participants, Ladies and Gentlemen,

As an effort to improve the television development in the years to come so that it will contribute a significant assistance in promoting the people's living quality, I think it is still relevant if we strongly emphasize the needs for professionalism, social responsibility and a sense of ethics. Freedom of expression does not mean the freedom to say anything or to express intolerance or hatred or incite to inter-ethnic or inter-religious conflicts. It would be impossible to separate freedom of expression from professional ethics.

I believe that television broadcast organizers wheresoever they are always have ethic foundation or code of ethics from their professional organization with some adjustment in accordance with the cultural values of their people. In the framework of promoting the concept of responsibility, it is
still relevant to raise the issue of appreciation to the authority of national sky area in the form of principle to obtain "prior consent" from the country within the broadcasting coverage of the beam emitted from DBS. In the seminar, this matter is expected to be studied, to what extent the principle of "prior consent" can constitute one of the legal frameworks which can be jointly agreed in realizing the professional ethics to protect and preserve the people's socio-cultural values just as we do the same way in taking care and maintaining our natural environment.

This endeavour is in line with the UNESCO strategy for 1990-2001 which gives priority to the field of communications and information as an effective means to promote continuous development programme with humankind orientation.

To all participants of the seminar, I bid a success, and I wish that the deliberation of this seminar may reach the target and improve the cooperation of the Asia-Pacific countries. And now, I declare "the Seminar on Television Development in the Asia-Pacific Region" officially opened.

Jakarta, December 8, 1994

MINISTER OF INFORMATION
REPUBLIC OF INDONESIA

HARNOKO