<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Seminar on Developments and Trends in the Rural Mass Media in Asia: Singapore, 16-18 January, 1989: [welcome address]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Author(s)</td>
<td>Menon, Vijay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>1989</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>URL</td>
<td><a href="http://hdl.handle.net/10220/297">http://hdl.handle.net/10220/297</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rights</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Welcome Address

By

Vijay Menon
SEMINARY ON :
"DEVELOPMENTS AND TRENDS IN THE RURAL MASS MEDIA IN ASIA"
Singapore, January 16 - 18, 1989

Welcome Address by Vijay Menon, Secretary-General, AMIC

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you, on behalf of all of us at AMIC, to this seminar on "Developments and Trends in the Rural Mass Media in Asia", the very first in our schedule of workshops and seminars for 1989.

Mention "rural mass media in Asia" and several pictures come to mind. The first is of the Asian land mass — about a third of earth's surface; of the many millions who inhabit it — over two billion nine hundred thousand at the end of 1988, expected to grow to more than three billion six hundred thousand by the year 2000; of a multiplicity of languages and a pervading illiteracy; of poverty and deprivation; of a vast constituency ill-served by the mass media.

Fourteen years ago, an AMIC conference on Rural Communication and Change reported: "Very little has happened during the last ten years which would lead to a state of optimism and complacency".

- contd. -
Three years ago, the keynote speaker at another AMIC conference bemoaned that "in most societies of Asia the so-called mass media are still the monopoly of the privileged few, the rich and the urban, and they may better be called class media as long as they do not reach out to the masses in the rural and remote areas.

Two years ago, the Director-General of Unesco observed that despite the reduction in the illiteracy rate in the Asia-Pacific region, the number of illiterates in absolute terms had not gone down; in fact is had increased - from 537 million in 1970 to 666 million in 1986.

Rural Asia, in many respects, does present a rather grim picture. But is it one of unrelieved gloom? Let us look at a few examples; admittedly isolated but certainly relevant.

Take China: In the 1950s China had 436 newspapers. In 1983, China had more than 2,700 newspapers and magazines with a total circulation of over 224 million copies. Approximately 500 newspapers and journals served the peasants.

In Indonesia, we read of the Koran Masuk Desa (KMD). This modest experiment to reach newspapers to the villages now involves 49 KMD weeklies and a rural circulation of over 500,000 copies.

- contd. -
In Indonesia, again, the Palapa satellite serves as the symbol of the communication revolution, linking 165 million people, belonging to 170 different ethnic groups, living on 13,677 islands spread over an area of over five million square kilometres. For the rural people, Palapa means television. It is opening up new horizons to the village audience, increasing knowledge, bringing change and encouraging the adoption of innovations.

In Sri Lanka, the Community Radio projects are taking radio to the villages. An evaluation study reported that "The Mahaweli Community Radio, in tandem with Mahaweli development workers, has motivated settlers to try innovative practices in agriculture and health. It has likewise motivated local development workers to take the settlers and their problems seriously, ensuring a more palpable degree of service to the people".

These are all well-known examples. But they serve to show that much has been happening in the rural media in Asia. Hopefully, your papers will reveal more such examples, which may be duplicated many times over to create the desired ferment necessary for progress.

- contd. -
Rural broadcasting in Asia can learn much from Australia where it is used not only to serve agriculture but also to help people to establish a point of contact with the outside world and to bring about a better understanding between rural and urban listeners. We are grateful to the University of Sydney for making it possible for Neville Petersen, Director, Information at the University of Sydney and a broadcaster distinction, to be with us here today.

And thanks to the Commonwealth Media Development Fund, we will learn at first hand from Tavake Fusimalohi how the Pacific Islands Broadcasting Association (PIBA) is striving to maximise regional manpower and capital resources for news and information gathering and dissemination. And from John Lamani, we will learn of the activities of the Pacific Islands News Association (PINA) to develop local papers as professional and economically viable enterprises.

Our January seminars in past years have usually been productive of practical recommendations which have generated further useful activity. It is our hope that this seminar will also serve to stimulate further activity in the area of rural mass media in Asia.

* * *

4