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<td><strong>Author(s)</strong></td>
<td>Sorajak Kasemsuvan.</td>
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Opening Remarks

By:

Sorajak Kasemsuvan
Mass Communication Organization of Thailand
Thailand
Welcome Address By:

Dr. Sorajak Kasemsuvan
Director-General
Mass Communication Organization of Thailand

At the Opening Ceremony of the
Seminar on Asian Media and Freedom of Information

08 May 2000
Imperial Queen’s Park Hotel, Thailand

AMIC Officials,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honour and pleasure for me to welcome Asian media professionals, academic specialists, and NGO representatives to Thailand for the Seminar on “Asian Media and Freedom of Information” organised by the Asian Media Information and Communication (AMIC).

The Mass Communication Organization of Thailand or MCOT and AMIC have long enjoyed the close relationship and cooperation in working together to organise seminars and workshops to provide a forum for experience sharing and networking among communication professionals and institutions in the Asia-Pacific Region.

As we are all aware, we are living in an age of Information whereby information is also power. And of course that information, which is a source for power could very often be obtained by means of the press media. It is, therefore, necessary that the media where from such information should derive must well adhere to ethics of journalism in obtaining, releasing, publicising and interpreting the relevant information. The media do have the utmost pivotal role in this age of information and in making the ideal freedom of information possible.

At the same time, the basic principle of “Freedom of Information” is openness and accountability. We should all have the right to know and equal access rights to information to information including official government documents that bear effect and repercussion on our lives, way of living and future. The right of access will enable the community to participate in its governance and to keep the government accountable. Therefore, it is our duty to cover matters of great public interest and disseminate them to the public. But right has always been accompanied by duty.
One important duty for those who exercise the right to know is the duty not to abuse such right and to make sure that the right is exercised responsibly. On our part, the media, this duty extends to the fact that even if we do not abuse the right but we must not use the information obtained and its implication to manipulate for either personal interest or the interest of the press company. No freedom of information process shall work for the general public at large if such rights are not sued sensibly and responsibly and if we do not allow for the fact that there is never such a thing as complete freedom and that everything does not have its own limits, one way or another.

The emergence of the Freedom of Information Act adopted by many countries in the world, is a major step towards implementing any Government's commitment to increasing openness in the public sector and also a significant step towards involving more people in decision making, which affects their lives. In Thailand we are proud to say that we have legislated the Freedom of Information Act even before the British Parliament does. What remains to be seen is how to develop a process that is fair, just and hard to be abused. However, freedom of the press, the rule of law, and free elections which are the main pillars of democracy all depend on a large extent of the literacy of the population. We, MCOT, as state-owned media organisation, also realises its role and responsibility in serving the public's utmost interest to make sure that these pillars and democracy at large should work successfully for all of us in the society.

I wish to express my thankfulness and appreciation to AMIC for organising this important event. Most importantly, your attending this seminar is very much appreciated and with your active participation may I express my sincere trust that this seminar will achieve all its objectives. And finally, may I wish you all good health and a pleasant stay in Thailand.