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<td>Menon, Vijay</td>
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Welcome Address

By

Vijay Menon
Honourable Information Minister, Raja Mohammad Zafarul Haq, Information Secretary, Lt. Gen. Mujib-ur-Rehman, Distinguished guests and delegates.

First of all I would like to voice the sentiments of the foreign participants in this seminar. We are glad that this happy collaboration between the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting has brought us to Pakistan. We are captivated by your capital, by the coolness of your weather and the warmth of your hearts.

A little over 12 years ago, in February 1971, the Asian Mass Communication Research and Information Centre (or Amic as it is known) was established in Singapore. Amic's founding was a result of the wisdom, foresight and spirit of cooperation of the Government of Singapore and the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, an independent foundation in the Federal Republic of Germany.

Amic is a regional mass communication institution. Our principal activities include documentation, publication, research and training. Our focus is Asia.

In the decade and more since our founding we have held workshops seminars and training programmes in most of the Asian Countries. Pakistan has been a notable exception — for no reason probably other than apathy induced by distance. Today's function marks the inauguration of our first ever seminar in Pakistan. For us, therefore, it has a touch of history. Also, of geography, for it fills a void in the map of our activities. But more than the filling of a geographical gap, we have no doubt that the importance of the seminar will
be in the closing of a more significant gap - the knowledge gap.

We have here Media Scholars and Practitioners from almost a dozen countries. The exchange of ideas and experience over the next three days will be, for every one of us an enriching experience. We will go back more aware and informed not only about the theme of our discussions Media, Tradition and change but, even more importantly, about Pakistan, its people and its media.

The learning process has already begun. In fact, it began when we landed at Karachi. The hour was late and we were tired. But the warmth, concerned and cordiality of those who received us had a tonic effect and helped in large measure to make up for the inconvenient timings of the airlines.

 Barely two months ago, editors from the five Asean Countries met in Manila. They voiced the need for an Ocean Priority - for ensuring that the news of developments rather than disasters find a place in the newspapers of their region. This could well apply to all Asia.

This was forcefully borne upon us when we had a brief tour of your gracious city yesterday. We were impressed by the Taxila Museum. Impressed to find so much time and effort and resources devoted to preserving for posterity what is essentially part of the heritage of mankind. We were no less impressed by the National Institute of Folk Heritage. These praise worthy activities do not make the headlines or even the news,
We have learnt a great deal in a day. We hope to learn a lot more during the remaining period of our stay.

Rapid social and technical change is the hallmark of modern urban society. But as scholars have turned, often progressed towards modernisation is neither smooth nor consistent. Aspirations are more easily awakened than satisfied. We must be guided less by ideology than by theory, less by dogma than by data. Finally, Mass Media are acknowledged to be the instrument of social change. These will be the subject of our concern during the seminar.

I would like to thank the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of Pakistan, for the interest they have shown in this seminar. Despite problems and postponements, the spirit of perseverance has triumphed and made the seminar a reality. To Mr. Masud-ur-Rauf, the initiator of the idea who is happily here with us today, to Mr. Abdul Qayyum and his team which has worked tirelessly under his able guidance, to Mr. S.M. Anwar, and, above all, to the Information Secretary whose personal interest and involvement can only be described as heartwarming, to our delegates and guests, I would like to convey our sincere thanks.

Finally, as we have established bonds with UNESCO and entered into agreements with the governments of Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, we hope that this seminar will mark a strengthening of our ties with Pakistan for further collaboration in the area of Mass Communication.