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By

Vijay Menon
Your Excellency, Minister of Information, Mr. Harmoko,
Honourable Governor of the Central Province of Java,
Distinguished Guests and Participants, Ladies and Gentlemen:

There is much concern in many Asian countries today about technology and the future. Concern about the pace and the implications of technological development. Specifically, there is concern about the accelerating rate of innovation in the means of communication and the fact that the developed countries have an edge in information and related services and are better positioned to capitalise on the information revolution.

The development of satellites best exemplifies the technological revolution that is the hallmark of our age. Between the launch of the first artificial earth satellite in 1957 and man's historic first step on the moon, the time lapse was only 12 years. And in the 15 years thereafter we have witnessed many other extraordinary technological achievements.
Reactions to these developments, even in the West, tend to be divided. At a colloquium organised by the United Nations about two years ago, a Scandinavian scholar had this to say: If the present trend is not changed, we will, in human terms, go backwards into the future with an accelerated speed every time new technologies are introduced. The world is today overwhelmed with technological innovations. Parallel to this we see a growing trend of human misery.

Opinion in Asia is also divided. Having missed out on the first industrial revolution, Asian countries are keen that they should not be bypassed by the second. There is an acute consciousness of the technological gap that currently exists. As the Secretary-General of the International Telecommunications Union recently pointed out, there is a glaring imbalance in the distribution of communication services and facilities. In 1982, there were 550 million telephones in the world. Of these 90% were in only 15% of the world's nations. Thus 85 per cent of the world, including most of Asia, had only 10 per cent of the telephones.

It is in this context that Asian governments are willing, even eager, to invest scarce resources in satellite technology. The hope is that this investment will ensure a brighter future for their people. But, as a third world scholar has pointed out, satellites cannot provide the solutions to problems which are primarily political, economic and sociological, requiring structural reforms.

The Indonesian government recognised the importance of science and technology earlier than most and invested in a domestic communications satellite. We also have the examples of India and Japan and the experience of other countries in the region. It is our belief that this seminar, representing as it does a meeting of minds from different regions, will help to clarify some of the critical issues, shed some light on some of the more important decision areas and generally contribute to our knowledge in this vital field of satellite technology as a communications equalizer.
The credit for this seminar should properly go to the His Excellency the Minister of Information. It was he who suggested that we should discuss Satellite Technology in Asia. We were glad to act upon this suggestion because the topic was timely the location singularly appropriate and, above all, because we have the highest regard for His Excellency who has had a long and active association with Amic.

For those of you who are unfamiliar with our organisation, I might explain that Amic is a non-profit mass communication organisation serving Asia from its headquarters in Singapore. Amic was founded in response to a suggestion from Unesco that there should be a regional documentation centre in Asia. From Documentation, we have diversified into Publication, Research and Training.

Amic is jointly sponsored by the Government of Singapore and the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, an independent foundation in the Federal Republic of Germany. I am glad to see the FES representative here. The FES not only helped to bring Amic into being but has also played an exemplary role, helpful supportive, non-interfering in enabling Amic to live up to its mandate of promoting the cause of mass communication in Asia.

What is most gratifying is the support that we are privileged to receive from so many individuals and institutions. This is exemplified by the seminar participants present here today. They come from Australia, France, Germany and Japan. From India, Malaysia the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand. And from Indonesia we have many distinguished participants, scholars and officials, who have readily agreed to give us the benefit of their experience and expertise so that this may be a fruitful meeting. To ESA, NHK and NSK we say Thank You. Also to ITU whose Secretary General has shown much interest in this seminar, and to INTELSAT, whose Director for Strategic Planning, though not with us today, has
contributed a paper and, as part of their Operation SHARE, sent details of a plan to provide free satellite time for a health promotion project.

We are charmed by Solo and impressed with what we saw at the Mass Media Training Centre at Yogyakarta yesterday. We appreciate the efforts of the Steering Committee and of the Organising Committee, of the officials of the Department of Information and the members of ISKI led by its Chairman, Dr. Alwi Dahlan, to make a success of this seminar. Above all, Hon'ble Minister, we are grateful to you for the encouragement and inspiration provided by your presence here to give the keynote address.