

Seminars, Conferences, Addresses

National Seminar on Development Journalism

19-21 Sha'bān 1413 / 11-13 February 1993
Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

This seminar, organized by the Asian Institute for Development Communication in collaboration with the Asia Foundation, was attended by thirty journalists and media professionals from Malaysia. Among the resource persons were Mochtar Lubis (Chairman, Press Foundation of Asia) and S. M. Ali (Chief Editor, *Daily Star*, Bangladesh).

The seminar was opened by Riley Haji Jeffrey (Deputy Minister of Information, Malaysia), who discussed the importance and the need for development journalism to achieve the goal of Vision 2020 (i.e., becoming a fully "developed country" by 2020). He said that "mass media should not deprive people of in-depth analysis or exposition of issues in the social, economic, cultural, and environmental fields." James R. Klein (Representative, Asia Foundation) analyzed the complementary roles of editors and journalists in fulfilling the objectives of development journalism. Khairul Bashar (Executive Director, Aidcom) outlined the seminar's goal: to offer a forum for senior journalists and media executives to exchange views, identify issues, and recommend methodologies for training in development journalism.

The "Satellite Teleconferencing" session, which focussed on investigative reporting, featured an Asian panel of senior journalists and American journalists. This was organized with technical assistance from the United States Information Service. The Asian panelists were Philip Matthews, Mochtar Lubis, S. M. Ali, Gamsudin Rahim, and Islami Lustapa. American panelists were Bell Dedman and Jonathan Newman. This panel discussed investigative journalism as practiced in the United States and on sharing the norms followed in practicing the same skills in Asia.

The panel on "Development Journalism: Challenges and Future Direction" was chaired by Haji A. Samad Ismail (Chairman, Panel of National Information Policy, Malaysia). Participants included Mochtar Lubis, S. M. Ali, Kadir Jasin (Group Editor, *New Straits Times*, Malaysia), Abdul Rahman Sulaiman (Editor-in-Chief, *Bernama* [Malaysian News Agency]), Haji Mazlan Nordin (Chairman, *Bernama*), and Samsudin Abdul Rahim (Head, Communication Department, National University of Malaysia).

The panel made the following points: development journalism should always portray changes that should be humanized; the process of adjust-

ment with bureaucracy and social issues should be mirrored; and there seems to be a need to pay closer attention to what the people are saying. Closing this session, the chairperson said that "media spread the message of independence, a sense of belonging. Our past reads for our present and so is the future. You should have the attitude of having a process reporting." He also alerted journalists on the emergence of a new generation. With more intellectuals and a new middle class, there is much hope for the future direction, he added.

In his paper, "Journalism and Development: Current Trends and Future Challenges," S. M. Ali shared his journalistic experience and offered some trade secrets. He stressed the need for media to identify linkages in various sectors of development issues that might help reporters present a more alternative story to the layman. He reiterated that a good relationship ought to exist between the government and development journalists.

Azman Hashim, who discussed "Investigative Reporting: Policies, Constraints, and Limitations (News Agencies)," spoke on how these elements are seen in a national news agency today. He said that the latest developments in the country have created a new definition and dimension for investigative journalism and that journalists can look forward to a more liberal and cooperative environment to make their tasks easier. Ismail Mustapa's "The Changing Role: Electronic Media in Development Journalism" traced the origin and development of electronic media in Malaysia and the part played by Radio Television Malaysia journalists and programmers. He pointed out the changing role of the electronic media from one of getting the message of the government through to the people to the current need of getting the feedback from the masses.

R. Nadeswaran, in his paper on "Investigative Reporting: The Challenge (Print Media)" said that a journalist, while performing his task, must be fully equipped with facts and have a thorough knowledge of law in order to do accurate investigative reporting. M. Rahmatullah, from ESCAAP, spoke on "Urbanization in a Regional Perspective." He pointed out the increase in the pace of urbanization and its ensuing environmental problems. According to him, there are three players here: the government, the media, and the society. Information dissemination to the government and society is the duty of the media, and it has to be performed at an even pace. He mentioned the need for a communication correspondent to help overcome the bad effects of urbanization.

Muji Hassan
Programme Officer
Asian Institute for Development Communication
Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia