

## AMIC organises South Asia's First World Press Freedom Day event in Male, Maldives

A first ever South Asia event to mark World Press Freedom Day (WPDF) was organised by AMIC in collaboration with the Maldives Ministry of Information, Arts and Culture, and the *Haveeru Daily*, with support from UNESCO. The two-day seminar, held on 2–3 May 2007, attracted over 100 local media participants and 18 media experts and practitioners from across South Asia under the theme of “Press Freedom and Development in South Asia”.

There were panel discussions on a number of issues relating to this topic such as: Press Freedom, Democracy and Development in South Asia, chaired by Dr Indrajit Banerjee (AMIC); Public Service Broadcasting and Community Media, chaired by Jocelyne Josiah (UNESCO); Censorship, Safety and Impunity, chaired by Javed Jabbar (Pakistan); and Internet, New Media and Freedom of Expression, chaired by Kanak Dixit (Nepal).

This is the first time that this type of conference



was held as a regional activity and the first to be hosted in the Maldives. A commitment was made by the government of the Maldives to mark World Press Freedom Day every year hence.

President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom of the Maldives in his keynote speech during the official ceremony commemorating this event on 3 May,

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Media experts and practitioners at the Conference.

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16th AMIC Annual Conference  
1st World Journalism Education Congress  
25–28 June, 2007, Singapore

## An ASEAN Media Community taking shape

Rear Admiral (RADM) Sim Gim Guan, Deputy Secretary (Information and Corporate Management), Ministry of Information, Communications & the Arts, Singapore, underscored the role media can contribute towards social integration as ASEAN is forging ahead its process of integration. He added that the media can transmit ideas and in turn influence people's attitudes and perceptions, hence contributing positively towards social integration.

He was speaking at a one-day seminar on “Public-Private-People Sector Partnership towards an ASEAN Media Community” held in Singapore on 2 May 2007. The event was part of a series of ASEAN Information Seminar, a project under the ASEAN Committee on Culture and Information

(COCI). It was jointly organised by the Media Development Authority, Singapore (MDA) and the Asian Media Information and Communication Centre (AMIC).

RADM Sim said that ASEAN is forging ahead with the process of community building based on three pillars: the ASEAN security community, the ASEAN Economic community, and the ASEAN Socio-cultural community. In January 2007, ASEAN leaders had agreed to form an ASEAN community in 2015. He stated that ASEAN is working towards strengthening its cooperation through enhanced structures and decision-making mechanisms and integrate itself with the rest of the world.

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RADM Sim Gim Guan, Deputy Secretary, (Information and Corporate Management), Ministry of Information, Communications & the Arts, Singapore.

## AMIC organises South Asia's First World Press Freedom Day event in Male (Continued from Pg 1)



Mohammad Nasheed, Minister of Information, speaking at one of the opening addresses at the Conference.

shared his personal experience of journalism and confirmed his government's commitment to policy reforms leading to democratisation of the media, which are presently ongoing through the Ministry of Information and Arts. "Maldives has been alien to a free press system, which is taken for granted in most countries", observed Mr Ali Rafeek, Editor of *Haveeru Daily* in the Maldives, a speaker at the conference. "The news media were used to manufacture consent", he added. But he said that there are fresh winds of change blowing across the Maldives. "We are now witnessing a public sphere on the Internet, while the print media have also become a market place for contesting ideas and debates. No longer are the news media exclusively channels of elite political communication", noted Mr Rafeek. "The amount of user-generated content, diverse and contesting views in the print media, shows that there is a paradigm shift. The publics have been empowered and they have become more vocal and vociferous in political communication." "While Article 25 of the Constitution guarantees freedom of expression, there are several laws that are not conducive to a free press", he added. Thus, he called for legal safeguards "without which the media practitioners are still vulnerable to government control or harassment".

Mr Javed Jabbar, a former Information Minister of Pakistan, focused his presentation on freedom of speech and religious sensitivities. "Without devaluing freedom of expression, the hard fact is that it comes several rungs lower on the scale of basic freedoms", he said, arguing that, the esteem with which adherents of religions hold their teachers and God "have a precedent status over unbridled license for expression". He even brought up the Danish cartoon episode to argue his point. "Whereas freedom of expression is intrinsically

external in expression and intrusive in its intent. The purpose is to let other human beings know about the views or sentiments of the person using freedom of expression. Therefore, freedom of expression, by its very nature and definition, has to be limited to the point beyond which it may cause grave offence to others", argued Mr Jabbar.

Ms Aasha Mehreen Amin, a news editor from Bangladesh, argued that the biggest threat to democracy in her country is the threat to the press coming from many sources. "The most frightening form of censorship has been physical assault and assassination", she said. "Reporting on organised crime, corruption of politicians and their cronies, anything that can be construed as 'anti Islamic', even something like illegal encroachment or land grabbing, can end up in a journalist being physically attacked or even killed". Add to the fact that the public institutions such as the police department and in many cases even the courts have been highly politicised, she argued, thus giving total impunity to the perpetrators who are often backed by ruling party members or other influential people. Thus, "the odds against the courageous truth-seeking journalist are quite formidable", noted Ms Amin.

Mr Sugeeswara Senadhira, media advisor to the government of Sri Lanka concentrated his presentation on the role of the Internet media like online forums and blogging in influencing traditional print media journalism. He pointed out that some political and terrorist organisations are using this media to fuel conflicts in his country rather than creating room for expanding the sphere for more freedom of speech.

Yet, he noted that most Internet users see online sources as often less biased and more informative than the official media. "This claim is often backed with the belief that online journalists are merely volunteers and freelancers who are not paid for their activity, and therefore are free from corporate ethics. But recently many Internet forums began to moderate their boards because of a threat of vandalism, which many users see as a form of censorship", Mr Senadhira pointed out.

Mr Kanak Dixit from Nepal spoke passionately about the role of the "people's media" such as community radio in facilitating the people's revolution against the monarchy to restore democracy in his kingdom. He also argued that the media will become the real people's voice only if the vernacular media is allowed to develop at the grassroots (in the villages) which will then influence

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the mainstream media in the capitol.

The “South Asia Press Freedom Report” published by the International Federation of Journalists with UNESCO support was officially released. A special television-style debate on South Asian issues relating to Press Freedom and Development wound up the official programme. The debate, which was moderated by Dr Indrajit Banerjee was filmed by Television Maldives (TVM) and was later edited down to a 23-minute video with the assistance of AMIC. This joint AMIC–TVM production will be launched as a DVD educational package at the World Journalism Education Congress in Singapore in June. AMIC plans to produce more of these material in audio-visual formats for use in tertiary educational institutions in Asia and other regions.

A highlight of the Male WPF event was the public confrontation between a small group of local journalists and the young articulate Information Minister of the Maldives, Mr Mohamed Nasheed. They had a lively confrontation after an impromptu lunch-time speech was given by the Minister to both local and international participants about his media reform moves in the Maldives. Though the IFJ report claimed that the Maldives press freedom record was dismal with constant harassment of journalists, the Minister said that he has six Bills in parliament designed to liberalise the media

environment in his far-stretched archipelago of 240,000 people.

“What has changed today is policy. Media policy of the government has changed”, said Mr Nasheed. “People should not expect us to achieve in one year what took many countries 100 years to achieve”.

When one of the journalists told the Minister that he should take steps to stop police harassment of journalists on the beat, the Minister countered by saying that the problem is with what he calls “multitask journalists”—that is NGO activists who claim to be journalists. “We have offered to have an accreditation scheme for journalists so that they could be protected but you people refused to accept it”, he told the accuser. “How can we identify activists from journalists without an accreditation scheme?” asked the Minister.

“The Maldivian turnout for this WPF Conference seemed indicative of the seriousness and commitment with which the government viewed the matter of freedom of the press and the thirst for knowledge and support on the part of the local journalists in their efforts in this field”, observed Jocelyn Josiah, regional communications advisor of UNESCO based in New Delhi. “AMIC must be felicitated for the hard work involved in making it become a reality”, she added.

## AMIC launches educational video series

AMIC has launched a new educational video series designed to provide classroom audio-visual resources for mass communication teachers.

These videos are produced in the style of television talkshows/panel discussions with a moderator and a panel of media experts drawn mainly from Asia. The first issue of the planned series addresses the topic of media freedoms in South Asia.

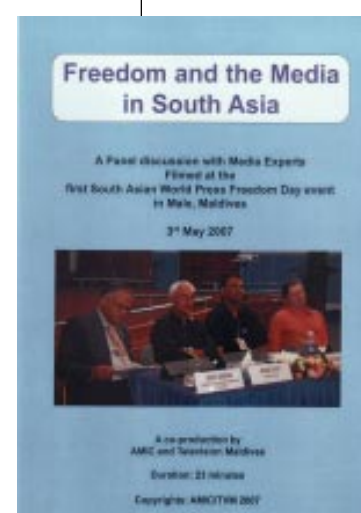
Moderated by AMIC’s Secretary-General Dr Indrajit Banerjee, the panel includes Javed Jabbar, a former Information Minister of Pakistan and founder of the South Asian Media Association; the well-known Indian investigative journalist Aniruddha Bahal of Tehelka.com fame; the publisher of the *Himal* magazine in Nepal, Kanak Dixit, who played a prominent role in the recent Nepalese version of people’s power; and Andrew Whitehead, who has covered South Asia for the BBC World Service for over a decade.

Filmed during the first South Asian World Press

Freedom Day seminar in Male, Maldives in May 2007, the 23-minute programme is a joint production between TV Maldives and AMIC.

“When I was teaching mass communication at a polytechnic in Singapore a few years ago, though there was a well stocked library of audio visual material at the polytechnic, I found that almost all of the material came from the West—mainly the US, UK, Australia and Canada. This project aims to fill a vacuum in Asia for audio visual material in mass communication issues with an Asian perspective and focus”, said Kalinga Seneviratne, Senior Research Associate, AMIC and the executive producer of the series.

Copies of the video in VCD or DVD format is available from AMIC at US\$20 or SG\$30. For order/enquiry, contact [angie@amic.org.sg](mailto:angie@amic.org.sg)



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## 16th AMIC Annual Conference 1st World Journalism Education Congress

### Day 1 25 June 2007

#### 0830–0900 Inaugural Session and Welcome Remarks

Chair: Dr Indrajit Banerjee, Secretary-General,  
AMIC

- Dr Ang Peng Hwa, Chairman, AMIC
- Dr Paul Pasch, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung,  
Malaysia
- Prof Joe Foote, Chairman, Organizing  
Committee, World Journalism Education  
Congress, USA

#### 0900–0930 Opening Keynote Address

- Guest of Honour Dr Tony Tan Keng Yam,  
Chairman, Singapore Press Holdings,  
Singapore

#### 1000–1200 Third AMIC Distinguished Forum

Media, Education and Development:

The Quest for New Paradigms

Chair: Prof Kishore Mahbubani, Lee Kuan Yew  
School of Public Policy, National University  
of Singapore, Singapore

- Mr Aidan White, International Federation of  
Journalists, Belgium
- Mr N Ram, *The Hindu*, India
- Mr Mahfuz Anam, *The Daily Star*,  
Bangladesh
- Mr Mohamed Nasheed, Ministry of  
Information and Arts, Republic of Maldives
- Mr John Liu, Environmental Education  
Media Project, People's Republic of China

Launch of the AMIC publication, *The Internet  
and Governance in Asia: A Critical Reader*

#### 1000–1700 WJEC Associations Meeting (for Association presidents and their WJEC Representatives)

#### 1330–1500 Plenary Session 1 Media Globalization and the Transformation of the Asian Media Landscape

Chair: Mr Mahfuz Anam, *The Daily Star*,  
Bangladesh

- Dr Hu Zhenrong, Communications  
University of China, People's Republic of  
China
- Dr Daya Thussu, University of  
Westminster, United Kingdom
- Ms Julie Sherborn, ACP Magazines,  
Singapore
- Dr Binod C Agrawal, Taleem Foundation,  
India

Launch of the AMIC publication, *Public  
Service Broadcasting in the Age of  
Globalization*

#### 1530–1700 AMIC Plenary Session 2 Media Freedom versus Responsibility: East-West Perspectives

Chair: Mr N Ram, *The Hindu*, India

- Prof Hans Henrik Holm, Danish School of  
Journalism, Denmark
- Mr Javed Jabbar, South Asian Media  
Association and Citizens' Media  
Commission of Pakistan, Pakistan
- Prof Guy Berger, Rhodes University,  
South Africa

- Mr Patrick Daniel, Singapore Press Holdings,  
Singapore

Launch of the AMIC publication, *Media Pluralism  
in Asia: The Role and Impact of Alternative  
Media*

#### 1900–2200 Gala Dinner (open to all AMIC and WJEC delegates)

### Day 2 26 June 2007

#### 0830–1000 WJEC Opening Plenary 1 State of World Journalism Education

Chair: Prof Joe Foote, University of Oklahoma,  
USA

- Declaration of Universal Journalism  
Principles
- Global Census of Journalism Education
- Regional Report on Journalism Education

#### 1030–1200 AMIC/WJEC Joint Plenary 1 Model Journalism Curricula for Developing Countries and Emerging Democracies and Launch of UNESCO's Model Curriculum Programme

Chair: Dr Abdul Waheed Khan, UNESCO,  
France

- Prof Michael Cobden, University of King's
- Prof Gordon Stuart Adam, Poynter Institute,
- Prof Hans-Henrik Holm, Danish School of  
Journalism, Denmark
- Ms Magda Abu-Fadil, American University of  
Beirut, Lebanon
- Mr N Ram, *The Hindu*, India

#### 1330–1500 AMIC Parallel Sessions A

- 1 Freedom of Digital Speech: Testing  
Boundaries in Singapore
- 2 Development Journalism & the Media
- 3 Children, Youth and the Media
- 4 Communicating in a New Media  
Environment I

#### WJEC Research Session 1

- 1 Journalism Ethics and Press Freedom  
Chair: Dr David Burns, Zayed University,  
United Arab Emirates  
Discussant: Dr Stephen Ward, University of  
British Columbia, Canada

#### WJEC Syndicate Teams Programme (1): Introduction

#### 1430–1730 GFMD Steering Committee Meeting

#### 1515–1830 WJEC Best Practices in Teaching Workshop Theme: Teaching Journalists in an Age of Ambiguity

Opening Session: Tomorrow's Journalism,  
Today's Students

Parallel Breakout Sessions

- 1 Go-far: Taking Students out of their Comfort  
Zones



25–28 June, 2007, Grand Copthorne Waterfront Hotel, Singapore

- 2 Teaching Journalism as Global, Interpretive Inquiry

1515–1815 **Editors' Roundtable** (by invitation only)

1530–1700 **AMIC Parallel Sessions B**

- 1 Media Laws and Regulations: Emerging Paradigms
- 2 Journalism Education I
- 3 Media Law & Ethics I

**WJEC Research Session 2**  
**New Media, Blogging and Journalism**

1900–2100 **AMIC AGM and Dinner**  
(only for AMIC members)

**WJEC State of Journalism Education Workshop** (by invitation only)

Chairs: Ms Suellen Tapsall, University of Western Australia, Australia & Prof Robyn S Goodman, Alfred University, USA  
Regional Reports from Africa, Asia, Israel, Oceania and Europe

### Day 3 27 June, 2007

0830–1000 **AMIC/WJEC Joint Plenary 2**  
**Who is a Journalist?**

Chair: Dr Gordon Stuart Adam, Carleton University, Canada & Poynter Institute, USA

- Mr Alex Gerlis, British Broadcasting Corporation, United Kingdom
- Prof Alan Knight, Central Queensland University, Australia
- Dr Cherian George, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore

0900–1200 **GFMD Meeting**

1030–1200 **WJEC Plenary 2**  
**Assessment, Accreditation and Government Regulation in Higher Education**

Chair: Dr Hussein Amin, American University, Cairo, Egypt

1330–1500 **WJEC Syndicate Teams Programme (2): Investigation & Exploration**

**AMIC Parallel Sessions C**

- 1 Journalism Education II
- 2 Community Media
- 3 Media Law & Ethics II

**WJEC Research Session 3**  
Journalism Education I

1515–1815 **WJEC Administrators' Workshop** (open to all)

- 1 Panel 1: Strategic planning in the administration of Journalism and Communication Programmes
- 2 Panel 2: Ways to assess the quality of your Programme
- 3 Panel 3: Funding collaborative research and student and faculty exchanges

1530–1700 **AMIC Parallel Session D**  
1 Media & Communication Education

- 2 Cross-Cultural Communication
- 3 Communicating in a New Media Environment II
- 4 Educating Tomorrow's Business Journalists: From Classroom to Newsroom

**WJEC Research Session 4**

- 1 Journalism Curriculum Development
- 2 Roundtable on African Journalism Education, Research and Publications

### Day 4 28 June, 2007

0830–1000 **AMIC Plenary Session 3**  
1 Media, Conflict and Crisis

**WJEC Parallel Session 5A**  
Institutional Initiatives & Partnerships: Innovation in Journalism Education

**WJEC Research Session 5B**  
Journalism Education II

1030–1200 **AMIC Plenary Session 4**  
Journalism Education and Practice in the 21st Century: Critical Issues & Challenges

**WJEC Parallel Session 6A**  
Research: Hot Topics, Future Directions

**WJEC Research Session 6B**  
Analyses of News Coverage

1330–1500 **AMIC Plenary Session 5**  
Media, Democracy & Development: The Journey Ahead

**WJEC Syndicate Teams Programme (3)**  
Conclusions & Recommendations

1500–1530 **AMIC Closing Keynote Address & Closing Ceremony**

Chair: Dr Ang Peng Hwa, AMIC

1. Closing Keynote: Dr Abdul Waheed Khan, Assistant Director-General, UNESCO
2. Closing Remarks: Dr Gerardo Josue, Chairman of the Organizing Committee, 17th AMIC Annual Conference 2008 in the Philippines & Dr Indrajit Banerjee, Secretary-General, AMIC

1530–1700 **WJEC Plenary Closing Journalism Education in a Global Village: Where do we go from here?**

Chair: Prof Joe Foote, University of Oklahoma, USA

### Day 5 29 June, 2007

0900–1200 **Post Conference Event: Journalism Education Association (Australasia) Roundtable**

- 1 JEA Roundtable: Australian Journalism Futures (by invitation only)
- 2 RQF: Implications for Journalism Researchers & Research in Australia
- 3 The role and future of the JEA in developing and delivering quality journalism education and supporting quality journalism

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## ASEAN Information Seminar (continued from page 1)



Speakers from the ASEAN countries. (L-R): Mr Lak Taechawanchai, Thailand, Ms Imee Marcos, Philippines, Mr Alexander Rusli, Indonesia, and Mr Pratap Parameswaran, ASEAN Secretariat.

However, harnessing the media is a challenge given the rapid advances in information and communication technologies, and changes in consumer behaviour. RADM Sim spoke about the Web 2.0 phenomenon with content being shared shifting into the hands of consumers such as via YouTube. RADM Sim brought up the question of how ASEAN would face the challenges of the new media landscape. With sites such as YouTube containing harmful spy ware and content such as pornography. ASEAN countries have to manage good information and build regional media centres and capabilities.

One key ASEAN project is the collaboration with Channel News Asia, Singapore to create a cultural documentary series on ASEAN countries to be telecast in each ASEAN country and distributed globally.

Mr Pratap Parameswaran, Assistant Director, ASEAN Secretariat, highlighted the three “Ps” or pillars that are present towards the realization of an ASEAN Community by 2015. They are the ASEAN Security Community which is about Peace, the ASEAN Economic Community which is about Prosperity and the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community which is about People. These three elements of Peace, Prosperity and People are at the core of a strong ASEAN Community.

However, Mr Parameswaran noted ASEAN has reached a critical milestone in its evolution and development. The challenges facing ASEAN today are many and there is no guarantee that it will continue to be relevant in the coming decades. As such ASEAN must address all these challenge and he calls for an ASEAN Charter to overcome these challenges. The Charter presents an opportunity for ASEAN to take stock of its achievements and shortcomings, reaffirm its relevance, and forge a

new path for its integration.

Five panel speakers from ASEAN countries shared with the audience their national experiences as well as raising issues pertaining to media developments within ASEAN.

Mr Tony Chow, President, Association of Independent Television Production Companies, pointed out the need to balance cultural imperialism from the West, for ASEAN to form a single market and also the need for ASEAN to tell the global audience about its stories within the TV, film, animation and other media sectors. Acknowledging an attempt to wean audiences away from foreign programming, the low budgets available for TV production resulted in low quality, and poor production standards. Like in many small media markets, Singapore itself cannot support or sustain its own products. Therefore, local media companies need to ensure that their products are made not just for local consumption, but also for a broader ASEAN, Asian, and international market.

He also added that ASEAN could also learn from The European Union’s Media Plus, concluding on the note that incentives for collaboration, further education and specific professional development, were key factors for success in resisting cultural imperialism.

Ms Marcos, a member of the House of Representatives, Philippines, told the attendees that Philippines was once the third largest filmmaker in the 1970s, and today there has been a serious plunge in its output of films. She conceded that the government alone cannot be held accountable for the onslaught of movies produced by the West on the local cinema.

She pointed out that “unless we as a region succeed in pooling our resources collectively, the global recognition of the ASEAN brand and culture is unlikely”. “The time has come for an ASEAN film exchange made by ASEAN for ASEAN. We should showcase our movies, TV and cartoons as one group providing a range and quantity of products”, she added.

Mr Alexander Rusli, Special Advisor to the Minister, Ministry of Communication and Information Technology, said that the government is no longer in control of disseminating information with the rise of new technologies. Hence the government sees the public sector playing three roles: managing limited resources within the media with the use of the Internet, ensuring that information is received in the appropriate manner in rural and urban areas, and seeing the industry progress.

## Media Pluralism in Asia

### The Role and Impact of Alternative Media

This book is the result of a research project covering eight countries in South and South East Asia examining the role and impact of alternative media. The definition of alternative media depends very much on the political, social, cultural and economic environment you live in. Thus, this book gives the reader an idea of the diversity of alternative media sources available across Asia, which is very much a result of the different media regulatory regimes in the countries we have included in this study.

While Bangladesh has had alternative media, in the form of community theatre and other artistic expressions for a long time, yet, community radio, which is fast becoming one of the most effective forms of alternative media in Asia, is slow to take off, because the regulations still do not allow it. Meanwhile in Indonesia and Thailand, community radio has taken off rapidly, with regulators struggling to come up with a formula to help regulate the sector while not shutting it down. In the

Philippine community radio has existed legally for many years and is thriving, thus, there may be lessons others can learn from this experience. In Malaysia, where legislation tightly controls the establishment of media outlets, there are yet, some interesting examples of how alternative media could be effectively operated via the Internet. Sri Lanka, offers an interesting model where elements of community broadcasting could exist within a public service broadcaster.

Thus, this book, gives you interesting examples from Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Nepal, Philippines, Sri Lanka and Thailand of how people are getting their voices heard—or are struggling to make that happen—using a variety of media and methods of expression. This publication should be a useful text for students of mass communications, community media practitioners, media/human rights activists, and development planners.



Edited by Kalinga Seneviratne  
2007 300 pp  
ISBN 981-4136-04-2  
SG\$30/US\$20 (Others)

## Media's Challenge: Asian Tsunami and Beyond

The tsunami demonstrated that modern journalists can do more than just bring unfolding stories to the world. One of the biggest lessons of the tsunami that is unravelling is that the modern journalist can also help to heal communities, rebuild lives, keep families intact and raise funds. The media should also keep an eye on government and relief agencies, helping to ensure that aid gets to the people who need it, and that those who deliver the goods remain accountable to the donors and practice ethical standards of aid delivery.

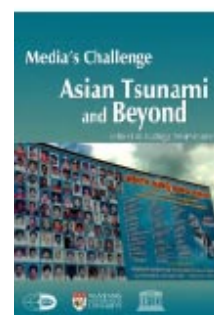
The question of media freedoms is also an important part of this equation. Beyond what journalists can do, there is also the matter of what authorities will allow them to do. In other words, the question of how much a responsible media will be allowed to do its job.

It is in the rehabilitation or healing process that the media face the most challenging task. In this endeavour, democracy and freedom to gather and disseminate information may not be enough. In

many parts of Asia and beyond, the mainstream media has been excessively commercialised. The tsunami became such a hot media issue around the world, because the dramatic pictures available were very attractive revenue making material for commercial broadcasters, but the rebuilding and healing process does not provide such pictures.

It is in such an environment, that this book examines the challenge journalists face in reporting a process that may not provide dramatic pictures, but still needs to grab the audience/readers' attention. Focusing more on the print media, many interesting issues dealing with the reconstruction and rehabilitation process are explored, with analysis and commentary on why some stories are not given the exposure they deserve and how these issues may be made newsworthy.

This book is a useful reference tool not only for journalists and journalism educators, but also for aid agencies and other organizations involved in disaster relief.



Edited by Kalinga Seneviratne  
2007 300 pp  
ISBN 981-4136-04-2  
SG\$30/US\$20 (Others)

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## India declares 2007 as the “Year of Broadband”

The government hopes that in 2007, which has been christened as the “Year of Broadband”, a target of nine million connections will be reached by giving broadband connectivity to all Gram Panchayats, Higher Secondary Schools and Public Health Centres progressively by the next year.

There are plans envisaging provision of twenty million connections by the year 2010, according to Communications and Information Technology Minister Dayanidhi Maran who said broadband service will provide the platform for various e-governance projects. Service providers will provide various value added services to suit the requirements of the consumers on commercial basis.

It was envisaged that the Department of Information Technology and Universal Service Obligation Fund will provide the necessary visibility gap funding for rural broadband access rollout, Mr Maran said in reply to a question in the Lok Sabha.

The Government has appointed a committee consisting Group of Ministers (GoM) to recommend the vacation plan for spectrum from Government and semi-Government agencies such as defence, space and paramilitary, etc. The Minister

said the policy on spectrum for 3G services would take into account the recommendations of GoM, which are awaited.

Dr Shakeel Ahmed, Minister of State for Communications and Information Technology, told the Lok Sabha that the government had recently approved a scheme for providing support for establishing 100,000 broadband, Internet-enabled, Common Service Centres (CSC) in rural areas of the country. These centres would be opened in the ratio of one CSC for every six census villages in a State, and provide a mix of government and private services in rural areas. The scheme is to be implemented in a public private partnership.

The CSC is a private entity loosely analogous to a franchiser which would operate, manage and build the VLE network and business.

He said the Government is in the process of taking necessary action to provide support for provision of infrastructure for mobile services including Wireless Access Services like Wireless in Local Loop (WLL) using fixed/mobile terminals in rural and remote areas of the country. The infrastructure shall be created in those specified areas where no fixed wireless or mobile coverage exists.

*Indiantelevision.com*

## Nepal to implement master e-government plan

In a bid to enhance efficiency of public administration, improve service delivery system and ensure transparency in bureaucracy, the Nepali government is implementing a five-year master plan on e-government.

The comprehensive plan—the final draft of which has been prepared by the High Level Commission for Information Technology (HLCIT) in collaboration with Korean IT Industry Promotion Agency (KIPA)—will be implemented between 2007 and 2011 after seeking approval of the Cabinet.

Madan K Pariyar, member secretary of HLCIT said that successful execution of the plan will help create citizen-centric and transparent bureaucratic system, improve productivity of civil servants, enhance national competitiveness and strengthen linkage between government and people and various state organs.

“These improvements will, in turn, push Nepal’s position on the UN E-government Readiness Index to 80 from the 126 of the present and allow general citizens to conduct almost 60 per cent of activities related to public administration from their homes using a computer and the Internet”, he said.

Acknowledging that overall development of a country like Nepal, with difficult landscape, is not

possible without harnessing the potential of ICT (information and communication technology), the government had initiated the process of formulating the master plan about a year ago.

The plan—considered a roadmap for domestic information and communication sector—is the first comprehensive document, which if executed properly is expected to bridge the digital divide, create knowledge-based society, boost national income and improve quality of life.

In order to achieve the envisaged goals, the master plan has identified four priority sectors, under which 33 projects would be implemented in four different phases.

In the first phase, all the internal processes of the government will be computerized. Upon completion of initial stage of works, initiatives will be taken to provide more comprehensive and citizen-centric services through innovation in administrative process.

In the third phase, online systems will be devised to handle request of citizens and in the last phase all processes of the government will be integrated to form a knowledge-based government.

*Kantipur Online*



## Google logs into rural India

The latest company to seek a fortune in India's rural markets is Google. It is developing with local vendors a simpler search engine, as well as content tailored to the needs of rural users.

The customised content for rural customers would include weather updates, crop patterns and other local data.

"How to make the search engine simpler and uncomplicated is a big challenge, but we will have an answer soon", Google Vice-president (Asia Pacific & Latin America) Sukhinder Singh Cassidy told *Business Standard*.

A steadily growing number of companies in sectors like fast moving consumer goods, telecom and retail are investing in the rural market owing to its growing prosperity. Google is the first global Internet giant to seek a pie of this market.

Google is also betting heavily on the mobile platform (as PC penetration is low) and plans to

introduce services like Google Talk (instant chat application), and Google Maps through tie-ups with Indian mobile operators.

Following the success of Orkut, a popular social networking site, in India, Google plans to introduce it in other Indian languages online and it might integrate it with its instant messaging service, Google Talk. Further, Google is planning to launch in India a mobile version of Orkut which will allow users to post messages to their friends online through SMS.

Google will also introduce its online advertising model, called AdWords, on the mobile platform. The advertising platform allows companies to exploit the field of mobile marketing.

Google is further looking at licensing partnerships with Indian publishers, broadcasting companies and those that own Bollywood content that could be made available on its sites.

*business-standard.com*

## Next, mobiles can be mind readers!

Technology innovations like eMobile that can read our mind, real-time speech translation, 3-D Internet are few among the list of products that will change human life in the next five years, IBM's India research laboratory director Daniel Dias.

"Collaborative research and real-world innovations are going to shape the future. Technology innovations will change our lives in the next five years", he said, unveiling a list of innovations that were expected to change the way people work, love and play.

The list was based on market and societal trends expected to change lives as well as emerging technologies from IBM's laboratories that could make these innovations possible. Advanced "presence" technology will give mobile phones and

PDAs the ability to automatically learn about their users' whereabouts and preferences as they commute, work and travel. Your phone will know when you are in a class or in a meeting and automatically divert to voice mail, he said.

Real-time translation technologies and services will be embedded into mobile phones, handheld devices and cars. These services will pervade every part of business and society.

Popular online destinations such as Second Life and World of Warcraft will evolve into the 3-D Internet. In this online world, you will walk the aisles of bookstores supermarkets, where you will encounter experts you rarely find in your local store. The 3-D Internet will enable new kind of education, remote medicine and consumer experiences, he said.

*PTI*

## Singapore telecom regulator singled out as best model

Singapore's Infocomm Development Authority (IDA) offers "one of the best regulatory models in the world" for countries wanting to play catch-up in embracing new convergence technologies, according to Hamadoun Toure, the Secretary-General of the International Telecommunications Union (ITU).

"Even though it is a small country, Singapore has one of the best regulatory models and it is helping ITU in providing capacity-building and technical assistance to hasten the development of telecom sector in various other countries that are currently lagging behind", he said.

Mr Toure says the standard-setting and regulatory roles will now have to be ahead of the speed of change in technologies.

Singapore's model, especially the role played by the IDA in the rapid development and regulation of the Infocomm sector, needs to be replicated in countries wanting to hasten the growth of the modern telecoms sector, he said.

"Maybe because of the size of the country, the Singaporeans have the ability to fight and adapt to new environment very quickly and they come up with very innovative solutions."

*The Business Times (Singapore)*

## UN launches consortium to tackle e-waste

The UN is to set up an initiative to extend the life of computers and electronic equipment, and tackle the growing problem of “e-waste” in the developing world.

Discarded electronic equipment can contaminate soil and water, and is a growing problem in developing countries as information technology becomes increasingly popular.

The Solving the E-waste Problem (StEP) is a consortium of major hardware manufacturers and software companies—including Cisco Systems, Dell, Hewlett-Packard and Microsoft—the UN and partner organisations. The initiative will highlight how many electronic items sent to developing countries in the name of charity often end up unused.

The key goals of the initiative will be to draw up global standards for recycling, extending the life of products thus creating markets for their reuse, and harmonising world legislation and policy toward e-waste. It will also take a “wealth from waste” approach, arguing that it is in the interest of manufacturers to recycle, enabling them to recover many expensive metals—such as Indium used in flat-screen monitors and mobile phones.

“There’s more than gold in those mountains of

high-tech scrap”, said Ruediger Kuehr of the United Nations University, which will host the StEP Secretariat in Bonn, Germany.

Burning e-waste causes emissions of highly toxic chemicals, which contaminate soil and water. Studies have shown rapidly increasing concentrations of heavy metals in humans. In sufficiently high doses they can cause cancer and problems with brain development.

STeP plans a large-scale project to help China safely dismantle and dispose of its domestic e-scrap. Supporters of the initiative say that maximising resources by reusing e-waste will help meet soaring demand in China and India for increasingly scarce resources such as ruthenium, used in resistors and hard disk drives.

Some software experts have voiced concerns that Microsoft’s new Vista operating system could worsen the problem by requiring more powerful hardware—making a large number of computers suddenly redundant. In February, a study by Toxic Link, an Indian nongovernmental organisation, found that India generates 150,000 tons of e-waste annually.

*SciDev.Net*

## Technology and globalisation are changing retail landscape

Technology and globalisation are changing the retail landscape and successful retailers will be those who can respond and adapt to those changes, attendees of the National Retail Federation’s annual convention were told.

National Retail Federation president and chief executive Tracy Mullin, Metro AG chief executive Hans-Joachim Koerber, and Microsoft Corp chief executive Steve Ballmer said technology and the Internet have altered how consumers shop and what they expect from retailers.

“Through blogs and consumer reviews, customers are letting the retailer know how they feel about shopping at their store or website, and whether they like the products they brought”, Ms Mullin said.

Retailers who have set up customer reviews, where shoppers can give feedback on products they have purchased, have reported more satisfied customers and fewer returns, she said, because consumers can learn from the experience of others and avoid products with bad reviews.

“The consumer is absolutely in a different position today and going forward than the consumer

was in the past”, Mr Ballmer said. “The consumers’ ability to get information, to be empowered, to know what’s out there, to make intelligent decisions, to stay organised, to dispassionately assess alternatives, to be in control, has never been higher.”

He pointed to the fact that Time magazine’s 2006 “Person of the Year” was “you”. Consumers expect more personalisation, tailoring and customisation than ever before, he said, and they expect to be able to search and get information or shop from their home, over the Internet or on mobile devices.

“They expect to be at the centre of everything that the businesses that serve them do”, Mr Ballmer said. “The ability for consumers to get information and be served in a variety of ways is only going to increase.”

Mr Ballmer also said that competition is becoming much more global and more focused on giving the consumer “exactly what they want”, with retailers trying to differentiate themselves through different store formats or experiences.

*Reuters*

## ASEAN patrol for World Wide Web

It has built one of Asia's first round-the-clock centres to monitor cyber threats, such as viruses targeting government websites. Now, Singapore will lead a new regional initiative against cyber crime.

The aim is to create a community of cyber-crime experts in the Association of South-east Asian Nations (ASEAN), said Police Commissioner Khoo Boon Hui at the close of the Asean Chiefs of Police (Aseanapol) conference.

Cyber crime generally refers to criminal activities carried out through the computer system. This includes not just sending spam emails and hacking websites, but also using the Internet to commit espionage and fraud, as well as scouring for sexual victims.

The new framework adopted by the ten ASEAN police chiefs after three days of discussion will be implemented in three stages over six years.

The first stage—to be implemented in the next three years—will include courses and training, study visits and an in-depth look at laws and policies relating to cyber-crime. It will involve officials in existing cyber-crime units in each member country.

The following two years will focus on improving investigation techniques and how information on cyber-crime is being shared.

In the last, year-long stage, trainees will learn

strategies to counter cyber criminals and explore collaborations with parties outside police forces. But capacity building is not the only focus of this new initiative.

ASEAN police forces will also look into improving communication between law enforcement agencies dealing with cyber-crime cases, because “speed is essential”, said Senior Assistant Commissioner Ang Hak Seng, deputy director of planning and organisation for the Singapore Police Force.

Commissioner Khoo added: “The officers in the cyber-crime unit in each country will be able to freely exchange views, best practices and quickly learn from each other”.

Mr Aloysius Cheang, president of local infocomm security association SIG2, suggested that such a regional framework must also examine cross-border legal issues. He said: “Singapore has cyber-crime laws like the Anti-Spam Act and the Computer Misuse Act. But if someone sends me a spam email from Indonesia, how will this person be implicated?”

Cyber threats have become a global security concern. Attacks on computers across the world increased by 29 per cent in the latter half of last year, according to a report published by Internet security agency Symantec.

*mediacorp.com.sg*

## Malaysian bloggers seeks to protect against government criticism

Malaysian bloggers, fearful of a government crackdown, have organized themselves in an alliance, not only to give them a stronger voice, but also to educate bloggers on basic journalistic rules and laws.

However, the National Alliance of Bloggers of Malaysia, or “All-Blogs” as it is better known, said its aim is to protect bloggers from the government's criticism.

“But All-Blogs is not set up to curtail bloggers' rights or restrict their freedom. The alliance will adhere to the Constitution and observe the laws and moral norms of the country, but its members, as bloggers, are free to express themselves through their blogs”, said its Chairman, Mr Ahirudin Attan, whose blog is of the most followed in the country.

In an effort to limit “wild blogs” and “raise the quality of blog content”, the alliance said it plans to conduct training on basic journalistic ethics, writing skills, and defamation and sedition laws on fabrication and plagiarism.

The Chairman also explained that All-Blogs has

no intention of becoming confrontational towards the government. On the contrary, it plans to open up dialogue that could be beneficial to all.

“What we want is to make contact with the relevant authorities and engage them in forums and discussions to raise the level of awareness about the positive and negative impact of blogging”, Mr Ahirudin said.

The authorities have lately shown signs of unease about blogging, a booming phenomenon in Malaysia. The tensions reached boiling point early in March when Deputy Internal Security Minister Johari Baharom was accused of corruption in blog posts.

This prompted a security ministry circular in which the government told editors of a dozen newspapers and five television stations that they must not “give any consideration whatsoever” to anti-government material posted online. Since then, various government officials have accused bloggers of lying, and called for regulations to limit their freedom.

*Today (Singapore)*

## Journalist union urge recognition for blogging

Malaysia's journalist union has called on the government to recognise blogging as a new medium of information, amid recent proposals by some government ministers to impose curbs on bloggers.

Ms Norila Daud, president of the National Union of Journalists Malaysia, said that the government should not dismiss bloggers' allegations of wrongdoing in the government without investigating these claims first.

"The government cannot simply say that whatever the bloggers write is wrong", she said. "It would be up to them to investigate." The group said that allowing blogging would lead to greater

transparency and accountability.

"This online phenomenon has made a great impact in Malaysia as an alternative information source on the current events and issues affecting the public", said Ms Norila. "As such, any abuses committed by public officials can be immediately exposed on the Internet", she added.

The journalists' move, which marks International Press Freedom Day, follows recent proposals by several government ministers that bloggers should be required to register to curb the spread of malicious content online.

*Associated Press*

## World newspapers body cautions disguised security measures introduced

Major terrorist attacks and threats against countries worldwide, particularly democracies, in recent years have led to the widespread tightening of security and surveillance measures, according to Timothy Balding, Chief Executive Officer, World Association of Newspapers.

The objective of these measures is laudable and compelling—the protection of citizens against threats to life and property. There is, however, a legitimate and growing concern that in too many instances such measures, whether old or newly introduced, are being used to stifle debate and the free flow of information about political decisions, or that they are being implemented with too little concern for the overriding necessity to protect individual liberties and, notably, freedom of the press.

Anti-terrorism and official secrets laws, criminalisation of speech judged to justify terrorism, criminal prosecution of journalists for disclosing

classified information, surveillance of communications without judicial authorisation, restrictions on access to government data and stricter security classifications, all these measures can severely erode the capacity of journalists to investigate and report accurately and critically, and thus the ability of the press to inform.

Balancing the sometimes conflicting interests of security and freedom might indeed be difficult, but democracies have an absolute responsibility to use a rigorous set of standards to judge whether curbs on freedom can be justified by security concerns and should set them against the rights protected in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which guarantees freedom "to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers".

This is the clear message we need to impress on governments and their agencies on World Press Freedom Day.

*www.wan.org*

## Kathmandu Post joins Asia News Network

Leading Nepalese newspaper *The Kathmandu Post* has joined the Asia News Network (ANN), a grouping of leading dailies in Asia, as its 16th member newspaper.

*Kathmandu Post* editor Prateek Pradhan signed a membership agreement with the network at a recent meeting in Seoul.

Founded in 1999, the ANN aims to improve coverage of Asian affairs in the Asian media. It now boasts a combined readership of more than 50 million.

Its founding members are: *The Straits Times* (Singapore), *The Star and Sin Chew Daily* (Malaysia), *The Jakarta Post* (Indonesia), *Vietnam*

*News* (Vietnam), *The Manila Times* (Philippines), *The Nation* (Thailand) and *The Statesman* (India).

The *Philippine Daily Inquirer* later replaced *The Manila Times* as the member from the Philippines.

Japan's *Daily Yomiuri* and *Yomiuri Shimbun* and the Beijing and Hong Kong editions of *China Daily* also joined the grouping. Its other members are *The Korea Herald* (South Korea), *The Daily Star* (Bangladesh), *The Island* (Sri Lanka) and *Vientiane Times* (Laos).

The ANN is supported by the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS), a German foundation that works for peace and development

*The Straits Times*



## Merger of Chinese papers in Malaysia and Hong Kong biggest media group outside China

Malaysian tycoon Tiong Hiew King's newspaper group has moved one step closer to becoming the biggest Chinese media group outside following the signing of a merger agreement between three companies controlled by him.

Malaysian-based Sin Chew Media Corporation and Nanyang Press Holdings will merge with Hong Kong-based Ming Pao Enterprise Corporation in a corporate exercise to be implemented via a reverse takeover of Ming Pao.

At the signing ceremony, Mr Tiong stressed the need to build or acquire multimedia content production capabilities. "The way forward is to go from local to global and from print to multimedia", said Mr Tiong, who would end up holding 52 per cent of the enlarged Ming Pao.

In a written interview with *The Straits Times*, Mr Tiong added that Chinese newspapers can never be purely profit-driven because they also play a role as social and cultural institutions. "Part of the responsibility of newspapers is to report the sentiments and raise the concerns of the community", he said.

"Do not confuse the merger, which is commercial transaction, with press freedom. We will uphold editorial independence", he said.

The group combined daily print readership averages 2.5 million, and its Internet presence is strengthening with Sin Chew, Nanyang and Ming Pao showing a combined monthly page view of 820 million hits.

Mr Tiong's media stable has five newspaper titles and 37 magazine titles which are distributed in Malaysia, China, Hong Kong, North America, Singapore and Indonesia. It plans to make further inroads into China and other areas with "a sizeable Chinese population".

Mr Tiong already has a near-monopoly of Malaysia's Chinese newspaper market following the acquisition of a controlling stake last October in Nanyang Siang Pau and China Press, the latter available in Singapore where it is legally distributed. The Nanyang Press buy further reinforced his clout in the Chinese media given his ownership of Sin Chew Media.

*The Straits Times  
& Business Times (Singapore)*

## "Nobel prize" for manga comic artists

Comic books are not just for laughs in Japan, whose government announced an international award to promote the art—and with it, they hope, the country.

Japan has set up a "Nobel prize" for foreign manga comic artists in the hope of spreading its pop culture and winning more fans for its robot villains, mutant heroes and saucer-eyed heroines. Comics and cartoons, referred to as "manga" in Japan, are hugely popular among adults and children.

Foreign Minister Taro Aso, an avid manga reader himself, said that the government had created the annual International Manga Award so that artists abroad could have a better understanding of Japanese culture.

"We want to make it something like a Nobel prize, although prize money won't be that big", he

told a news conference.

The award is the brainchild of Mr Aso, who first proposed the idea last year in a speech he gave in Tokyo's Akihabara district—the mecca of Japan's otaku or nerd subculture that cherishes manga and "anime" animation movies.

He spoke then of the power of pop culture to influence the public, noting how the United States won over Japanese hearts with its pop culture, including the cartoon Popeye.

The manga award is open to both professional and amateur artists worldwide. A panel of Japanese manga artists will select the winners of the top prize and three other incentive awards. They will win a visit to Japan and get to meet Japanese manga artists and publishers.

AFP

### Public Service Broadcasting in the Age of Globalization

Edited by Indrajit Banerjee & Kalinga Seneviratne 352 pp ISBN 981 4136 018 SG\$35 (Asia)/US\$23 (Others)\*

This book takes a scholarly perspective aimed at creating debate about the role and function of public service broadcasting at a time that it is facing a variety of threats, not only from governments, but more so from commercialization of broadcasting.

Case studies and experiences of twelve countries are covered, giving a global perspective on the state of public service broadcasting in the age of globalization.

The book is useful for academic purposes, advocacy, generating content or whatever other means by which the principles of public service broadcasting can be maintained, developed and nurtured so that public broadcasting will serve the people and not private purses or power-hungry politicians.

\*The price of the publication does not include postage and handling charges. For your order/enquiry, contact [angle@amic.org.sg](mailto:angle@amic.org.sg)



## India to pass major Broadcast Bill

A comprehensive Broadcast Services Regulation aimed at detailed guidelines for regulating the content and distribution of radio and television channels will be introduced in the Monsoon Session of Parliament.

This was stated by Information and Broadcasting Minister Priyaranjan Dasmuni while replying to the Cable Television Networks (Regulation) Bill 2007, making it mandatory for all cable operators to show the Lok Sabha TV and at least two Doordarshan terrestrial channels in the prime band. The Bill was later passed unanimously by voice vote.

Dasmuni said a draft of the Bill had already been shown to various stakeholders whose views were being ascertained by him before giving a final shape to the legislation, which would be a most comprehensive law on the subject. He indicated that it would have provisions for a self-regulatory mechanism for content regulation.

Dasmuni said the Bill had also become necessary because the number of channels had grown manifold since the Cable TV Networks (Regulation) Act was passed in 1995. He said there were 340 channels at present and this was expected to go beyond 400 by next year, and would cross the total channels in Europe and the rest of Asia by the end of the 11th Five Year Plan.

The Minister also announced that the conditional access system had proved to be a great success and would be extended to other areas in all the metros shortly.

Referring to the fact that almost all news TV channels were spending around 60 per cent of their time on entertainment news, he was meeting the editors of all channels to discuss the content of the news bulletins.

The Minister said the government would implement within the next two months the recommendations of the group headed by senior film artiste and former Member of Parliament Shabana Azmi on checking piracy of entertainment software.

He said that the government did not believe in controlling the content of the TV channels but had to ensure that no channel passed certain permissible limits. He said that his ministry had issued 75 show-cause notices to various TV channels but had failed to get replies and therefore had to resort to the strong measure of banning AXN and later FTV.

Explaining the procedure for this, he said that the inter-ministerial group monitoring channels first went through the recording of a programme about which a complaint was received and only then decided to take punitive action.

*indiantelevision.com*

## Power of Peace Forum supports global peace network



Abdul Waheed Khan,  
Assistant UNESCO  
Director-General for  
Communication and  
Information

An ambitious proposal for a global multi-media, multi-platform, multi-lingual content distribution network, to promote peace, was endorsed recently at a forum hosted by UNESCO and the Indonesian Government in Bali.

With a working title of the "Power of Peace Network" (PPN), the network concept envisages creating partnership between NGOs involved in the promotion of peace and sustainable development, religious groups, content producers, traditional media, new media and ICT service providers to give wider exposure to locally produced content on themes that promote cross-cultural understanding and peace.

The proposed PPN will not compete with existing services but collaborate with them to enhance and expand their reach, and will attempt to fill the gaps in regions presently underserved by media.

It will seek support from major foundations around the world in order that a strong not-for-profit business case can be established to sustain

operations on a long-term basis.

In a declaration titled "The Spirit of Bali", the participants called on UNESCO to explore ways to create an innovative mechanism, along the lines of the PPN proposal, through which media and information technology can be utilised to enhance mutual understanding, further dialogue among peoples and cultures, and build peace.

"Such a mechanism has to be open, inclusive, participatory and collaborative. It should involve the children and youth of the world, leave no one out, and help us know better who we are in the world", the declaration said.

"It should involve the Internet as well as film, radio and television, and should utilise all possible delivery systems including online, wireless and broadcasting satellite."

Abdul Waheed Khan, Assistant UNESCO Director-General for Communication and Information, welcomed the outcome of the Forum and said he was "looking to working on the development of the Power of Peace Network and translating the Spirit of Bali into practical action".

*portal.unesco.org & ABU News*

## Pan-Asia Mobile-TV group formed

Leading communications and technology groups have announced the formation of the Pan-Asia mobile-TV consortium. Involved are SK Telecom, Toshiba, Glocal Media Networks and the International Mobile Broadcasting, who said the consortium was formed to enable digital multimedia broadcasting for mobile operators in the region.

Mobile-TV trials organized by the consortium have been scheduled to begin in the first quarter of 2007.

SK Telecom is South Korea's leading mobile company, with more than 20 millions subscribers. Toshiba was the founder of MBCO (Mobile Broadcasting Company of Japan) while Glocal Media is an international content aggregator. Singapore's International Mobile Broadcasting is the holder of mobile-TV licences and spectrum in

the region.

Masashi Suenaga of Toshiba said of the pilot scheme: "The vision will bring a new era of broadcasting in Asia. People can enjoy informative, educational and entertaining live content from all over the world anytime and anywhere with their cell phone cost-effectively by adopting the S-DMB system—that was commercially proven in Japan and South Korea".

SK Telecom President JH Kah also expressed positive expectations: "The Pan-Asia mobile-TV initiative will open a window of opportunity for the mass in the Asia-Pacific to enjoy global content ubiquitously through their mobile handset. This multi-lateral, cross-cultural initiative will exemplify the vision of a united Asia.

APB

## Singapore media regulator plans to review media code

In a move aimed at creating a framework for new media players and providing more public choice, the Media Development Authority (MDA) plans to expand the scope of its Media Market Conduct Code beyond the broadcasting and print sectors.

In a briefing to reporters, MDA—which is seeking public consultation on proposed changes to the code—said the move is part of its continuing effort to nurture a pro-business environment while ensuring more choice.

"The revision of the code will ensure that it remains relevant and effective in promoting fair market conduct and competition amid the rapid changes in the Singapore media industry", it said.

MDA aims to issue the revised code that was introduced in 2003 to deal with competition issues related to broadcasting and print media in the fourth quarter of 2007.

Proposed revisions include expanding the code to deal with the evolution of new media markets and ensure that players do not "unfairly engage in practices by leveraging on their affiliates' significant market power in a media or non-media market".

MDA's Director of Media Policy, Ling Pek Ling, said this will let MDA "reach into places" where leveraging happens beyond the media industry, thus expanding MDA's jurisdiction beyond just media players in certain situations. Specifically, she said that with the growing convergence of traditional and digital media, there is greater opportunity for media players to leverage on cross-subsidisation and non-media affiliates.

"The media landscape has changed since 2003 and a good example is the adoption of different business models by traditional and new media players", she said. "With the emergence of new media markets and the introduction of High Definition TV and Internet protocol (IP) TV services, it is timely for us to look at how we can update our code to meet the needs of the media industry."

Under the revisions to prevent anti-competitive leveraging, media service providers will not be allowed to accept cross-subsidisation from an affiliate that has significant market power where this would let the service provider engage in predatory pricing.

Also proposed is a widening of access to advertising. This will require dominant media players to provide any media service provider with access to advertising capacity at "reasonable and non-discriminatory prices, terms and conditions", subject to MDA guidelines.

"We have widened this obligation to cover all other media service providers, such as online services", Ms Ling said.

In drafting the revisions, MDA engaged consultancy firm KPMG to help align the revised code's competition principles and applications with international best practices.

Richard Paton of KPMG UK's transaction services said the proposed revisions mean current media players may have to change their practices, and certain practices allowed in the past will be disallowed.

*Business Times (Singapore)*

## Asian Film Archive collaboration

The Asian Film Archive (AFA) and the National Library Board (NLB) of Singapore have agreed to set up a reference library collection of films made by Singaporean and Asian film makers.

Under the memorandum of understanding signed, NLB will facilitate access to reference copies of the Asian Film Archive collection by the public and film researchers.

The AFA will undertake to collect, evaluate, document and catalogue films for research or viewing by library users. The collection will be housed at one of the Singapore's library branches and will consist of culturally important films from the region.

The memorandum also includes the agreement involving NLB, AFA and the Singapore Film Commission (SFC) in working together to preserve and promote Singapore's film heritage.

The NLB and the AFA will also host a series of film literacy seminars, film screenings and workshops on the film heritage of Singapore and Asia to encourage the community to access the collection. The NLB, AFA and SFC hope to archive

1,000 Singaporean and Asian films by the end of the year.

The collaborative works of AFA was highlighted at a seminar on "Public-Private-People Sector Partnership towards an ASEAN Media Community organised by AMIC and the Media Development Authority of Singapore. Mr Tan Bee Thiam, Executive Director, Asian Film Archive, said that the Asian Film Reference Library will be ready in August 2007 with a collection of South East and Asian films.

Collaboration is also conducted within the industry to give a regional perspective on filmmaking for local audiences. The goal is also to become an aggregator and provider of film resources for the South East Asian community for young people to get to know the community through cinema. He also added that the various projects undertaken by the Archive in fostering a private, people and public collaboration and spoke how this was a successful model that could be fine-tuned for the region.

*The Business Time (Singapore)*

## Hong Kong movies being geared toward expanding Chinese market

Hong Kong movies, long known for their stylish violence, are being geared toward the expanding Chinese market and stricter censorship standards there, and observers are worried that Hong Kong cinema is losing its edge.

Hong Kong-Chinese co-productions are now the norm. Top directors favour ancient Chinese epics that appeal to a broader audience and are less likely to offend Chinese censors wary of bloodshed or flesh baring. Stories about gang feuds and urban love stories are becoming rare, giving way to period dramas.

The shift toward more culturally generic topics is motivated in part by a heightened sensitivity to China's authoritarian government, which, despite free market reforms, screens media content carefully.

Ann Hui, a respected Hong Kong director, said she was careful about portraying a Chinese policewoman in her Chinese-financed love story *Goddess of Mercy*. "The Chinese censorship system bans quite a few topics including sex, violence and the dark side of real life", she said.

Some film industry insiders fear China's ideological control is stifling creativity in this

freewheeling former British colony that returned to Chinese rule in 1997.

"When the trend is to seek out mainland Chinese investment, topics set in mainland China and relying on the Chinese market, it's hurting the fundamental quality that's unique to Hong Kong movies", director Stanley Kwan said.

William Pfeiffer, chief executive of Hong Kong-based Celestial Pictures, said many believe one of the territory's most celebrated movies in recent years, *Infernal Affairs*, would not have been made, given its theme. (The crime thriller, which inspired the Academy Award-winning *The Departed*, portrays an undercover gangster's success in infiltrating the police.) But Hong Kong filmmakers have shown a pragmatic streak, saying they're willing to work within China's content constraints.

Pfeiffer said Hong Kong stars, directors and writers who work in China still apply their unique brand of creativity to Chinese projects.

"Yes, if you're shooting in China you have to play by the censorship rules there, but in any case, it still will have the look and feel of Hong Kong picture", he said.

[www.hinduongnet.com](http://www.hinduongnet.com)



## Fashion TV under fire in India for spoiling culture

A fashion television channel has come under the spotlight in India for its raunchy broadcasts at children's viewing times, prompting the country's Information minister to warn the media against denigrating culture.

Priyaranjan Dasmunsi, who stirred controversy when he banned AXN channel for airing "The World's Sexiest Advertisements", told Reuters that he was examining Fashion TV (FTV) for its adult content.

India banned FTV, a cable channel, in February 2002 for showing too much flesh but the decision was reversed a week later when the channel promised to adhere more closely to Indian sensibilities.

"I have got the highest number of complaints from schools, colleges about Fashion TV operations", said Dasmunsi, the Information and Broadcasting Minister. "The kind of things they show, even in school-time, examination-time, daytime, I think that's not fair. 'I straightly, plainly tell you, it is time for Fashion TV channel to think of whether they should confine their programme beyond 11 (pm)', the Minister added.

Music videos featuring sexy dancers and a suggestive advertisement of a woman licking an ice cream have irked Dasmunsi's ministry. Fashion

TV was not immediately available for comment.

Indian cultural values are different from those in Europe and the United States, Dasmunsi said, and this should be respected. "Freedom of culture and expression should always be honoured but freedom to denigrate the culture, freedom to spoil and compromise the culture, should not be encouraged", he said.

Vehemently denying he was acting as the "moral police" in a country which gave the world the *Kama Sutra* sex book, the minister said he wanted only to preserve "Indian cultural values". "I am a student of literature. I am as liberal in matters of culture, art and other things than any one else. I am second to none. But there should be a limit", Dasmunsi said.

He also advised television channels to do "self-monitoring" and parents to use their discretion while taking children to films which may have provocative scenes or dances.

India has more than 300 cable TV channels. It is set to be Asia's leading cable market by subscriber numbers by 2010 and the most lucrative pay-TV market by 2015.

There are an estimated 65 million cable homes in India, the world's third-biggest cable television market.

*indiantelevisom.com*

## TVs may lose out to new, Internet-enabled devices

The traditional television box may lose its place of honour in the living room to a crop of new devices that send films and shows straight to screens and telephones via the Internet, analysts say.

"In a couple of years, we'll be seeing television change from being a dedicated box to being part of a home network, connected, eliminating all the wires", said Tim Hanlon, Senior Vice-President of media consulting company, Denuo. "It's a cross-line between Internet and TV experience", he said.

Devices such as the brand-new Apple TV and TiVo's decoder and recorder, allow films and programmes to be downloaded from the Internet for direct viewing on a television screen.

"I could watch Internet video on a TV, and the reverse", Hanlon said, "and you could receive a multitude of content from online stores.

The technology can also relay videos from the Internet to the smaller screen of a mobile telephone, enabling a phone user to gain access to a

Hollywood studio's back catalogue or entire television series in their pocket.

"Obviously it is no substitute for leaning back and watching two-hour movies on a HD TV set", Hanlon said. "But if I'm interested in a basketball game and my plane is delayed, a little screen may be exactly what I want."

Downloads to the new breed of television devices still take some time—around an hour for a film to a TiVo device—and the videos available are limited to those from certain participating studios.

But a device with fewer restrictions is in the pipeline. The Slingcatcher, released by Sling Media, will directly transmit videos streamed on the Internet to a television screen without limits on the content. However, reproducing video content this way has legal risks. The US entertainment giant Viacom has launched a billion-dollar lawsuit for copyright infringement against Google and its affiliate video-sharing website YouTube.

*Taipei Times*

## Virtual advertising agency

The Internet has allowed consumers to trade stocks without using high-priced brokers and travellers to book flights directly from airlines.

Now it may free advertisers to make their own television commercials without going through a traditional advertising agency.

Several companies are offering automated ad creation over the Internet and, in some cases, ad placement services that all advertisers can use to focus their marketing more tightly.

Advertisers use the new sites to select scenes from commercial films and customise campaigns with a few clicks of the mouse and little human interaction, often for a low flat fee.

Mr Jordan Zimmerman, Chairman of Zimmerman Advertising, Florida, who calls the automated service “a virtual advertising agency”, acknowledged that the move could be considered as turning creative ads into a commodity.

The new systems threaten some of the roles that advertising agencies have traditionally played. National advertisers, mainly in the retail, real estate and car industries, are using the systems to make their messages more relevant on the local level.

Zimmerman, an advertising agency that is part

of the Omnicom Group, is selling stock advertising and online buying for TV, the Internet, print publications, radio, direct mail and in-store ads.

The automated system it is offering to advertisers, called Pick-n-Click, is currently available only for automotive advertisers and has 150,000 components—like voice-overs, video footage and text options.

The Internet began chipping away at the mass messaging model, and advertisers are now increasingly interested in taking what they have learnt in the online world about custom marketing and using it in the off-line world.

“If there’s a man and a woman watching television in two different houses and you are Procter & Gamble, it would be more efficient to show one of them an ad for a Gillette’s men’s razor and the other a women’s ad,” said Mr Mark Read, director of strategy at the WPP Group, an advertising holding company.

To customise ads, the companies, to a varying degree, link postal codes with census and other third-party data to develop local demographic profiles, isolating viewers more finely than typical cable operators.

*The Straits Times*

## Advertisers figuring out how to go mobile

Old media lagged behind in the race to go online, in part because the prospects for advertising—traditionally the major revenue source for newspapers, magazines and television—seemed unclear on the Internet. Then, online advertising took off, and the old media are still playing catch-up. Now, with the next iteration of the Internet, the mobile web, spreading around the world, publishers and other content providers are trying to avoid coming in late on another advertising bonanza.

In London, the Online Publishers Association released a study showing that mobile Internet use was on the rise, as was acceptance of mobile advertising. The survey—conducted by TNS Media Intelligence in the United States, Britain, France, Germany, Italy and Spain—found that 76 per cent of cell phone owners in those countries had web access from mobile devices.

The researchers polled about 1,000 people in each country and found that over a third of those who had mobile web access used it. The population using the web ranged from 34 per cent in France to 54 per cent in Britain. In advertising terms, however, the mobile phone remains very much the third screen, behind television and the computer.

Mobile advertising has grown rapidly in markets like Japan, but outside Asia, activity is still dominated by “text and response” campaigns that for example, ask users to send text messages for more information on a product, or enter a contest.

The personal nature of the link between cell phones and their users has made marketers tread carefully. Some mobile advertising—unsolicited text-message spam, for instance—is illegal or against advertising regulatory codes in many countries.

The online publishers’ survey indicated that consumers remained wary. Only 18 per cent of respondents in the United States said they were receptive to the idea of watching ads in exchange for free mobile content. The percentage was higher in Europe, where 37 per cent said they would do so. But the study also showed how effective mobile advertising could be if the personal space could be entered deftly.

Sizeable percentages of respondents said they had visited a web site or requested more information about a product after seeing a mobile ad.

*New York Times*





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## AMIC's Secretary-General visit to Indonesia to renew ties and establish new initiatives

Dr Indrajit Banerjee, Secretary-General, AMIC, visited Indonesia from 12-15 April 2007 to renew AMIC's ties in the country of great many media reforms in recent times.

Over the years, AMIC has held various conferences and seminars in Indonesia. With the changing media landscape there, AMIC is keen to re-establish these close ties with their Indonesian counterparts. According to Dr Banerjee, Indonesia has an extremely rich media tradition with highly skilled journalists who have been there during the entire span of the campaign for political and media reforms. "It is AMIC's best interest to work in such an environment and build up ties once again", he added.

While delivering a speech at the Habibie Center in Jakarta on Journalism Education, Dr Banerjee added that "the Habibie Center can be a potential good partner for us to organise our seminars and workshops". He held talks with the Director of the Center regarding future collaborations.

The Habibie Center was established in 1999 as a vehicle for the people of Indonesia to begin the continuing process of democratization and the protection of human rights. The Center is founded by Bacharuddin Jusuf Habibie, the ex-President of the Republic of Indonesia, as an independent, non-governmental and non-profit organization.

During his visit to Jakarta, Dr Banerjee had a meeting with the special adviser to the Ministry of Information of Indonesia and he also had a meeting with the Dean and staff of the mass communication programme at the The London School of Public Relations (LSPR) which is a private university located in central Jakarta.

Dr Banerjee also visited Jogjakarta where he was a keynote speaker at the National Journalism Education Conference. It was noted at the Conference that it is vital to nurture qualities of journalists in institutions, and hence the need to possess an educational structure.

The Conference was attended by lecturers from media and communications institutions, representatives from journalism institutions from various schools, media practitioners and others.

Dr Indrajit Banerjee said that "journalists constantly face society and must provide



Dr Banerjee delivered a speech at the National Journalism Education Conference, Jogjakarta. He cited three key factors that every journalism institution should base their curriculum on.

information that is substantial". They also control the social aspect of the nation. In order to raise the skills of journalists, there are three key factors that every journalism institution should base their curriculum on: standards, ethics and values working within the context of the nation. In addition, the curriculum must also teach journalists to be investigative and gain a passion for writing in their own creative ways.

During his Jogjakarta visit, Dr Banerjee was able to visit the Multi Media Training Centre and meet with its Director. He was very impressed with its facilities. "It has very good facilities, and state of the art technology. There is even a place to stay for people and officials. But I think that there are some of the problems that we face in Asia. We have far more capacity in terms of knowledge, experience than it is presented. We have good centres for excellent visuals, which are under-utilised most of the time because it is government controlled. It is for training Indonesian broadcasters but they don't realise it could be a regional institution", he noted. He pointed out that AMIC could tie up its regional training initiatives with the Center.

Dr Banerjee summed up his visit to Indonesia as a fruitful exercise as he has covered sufficient groundwork through making key contacts with media institutions and forging collaborative ties for possibly conducting future training initiatives. He was accompanied on the trip by AMIC's Senior Research Associate Kalinga Seneviratne.

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Asian Media Information  
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Centre (AMIC)



School of Communication  
and Information,  
Nanyang Technological  
University

*Mailing address:*  
Jurong Point Post Office  
Box 360, Singapore  
916412  
Tel: (65) 6792 7570  
Fax: (65) 6792 7129  
Email: [enquiries@amic.org.sg](mailto:enquiries@amic.org.sg)  
<http://www.amic.org.sg>

*Editor-in-chief*  
Indrajit Banerjee  
*Associate Editor*  
Stephen Logan

*Contributing Editor*  
Kalinga Seneviratne

*Editor*  
Angie Chew

*Printed by*  
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Services