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INTERNATIONAL PRESS INSTITUTE
Asian Programme
P.O. Box 3350
Manila, Philippines

Amitabha Chowdhury, Director

Cable Address: "IPASIA"

May 18, 1966

Dear Edith,

Of the several important side effects of the Asian Economic Editors Seminar the most valuable of course was the resuming of contacts with the Indonesian Press.

There are today many signs of Indonesia's efforts at ending her long and self-imposed isolation. For IPI it was of special importance that Sanjoto Sastromihardjo of Business News, Djakarta joined the seminar with the express permission of Indonesia's new Foreign Minister Adam Malik, thus indicating, perhaps the end of IPI's status non grata with the Government.

Freed from years of guarded speech the two Djakarta newsmen, Sanjoto and Dr. O. G. Roeder, were now able to address an international seminar with refreshing candour. In fact, a remarkable perspequity and frankness marked their discussion papers. They laid bare the reasons of the near-collapse of Indonesia's economy, listed the government moves now afoot for the recovery, and frankly told the seminar where the pitfalls lay for the ruling group.

And, for the first time since the "confrontasi" began in 1964, here were two newsmen from Indonesia sitting across the table with the two from Malaysia and Singapore, discussing the logics of economy that should bring the countries of the region closer again. They discussed what an economic journalist could do to help the process.

Also, there was a note of irony. Like as in a game of musical chair, one was in, so another had to be out. Four editors from Pakistan were denied by their government permission to attend the seminar.

Nevertheless, one could feel on the very first day that this gathering of 35 leading economic editors and writers is going to produce excellent results. In fact it created a new record for IPI. For five days they explored the dual theme of economic growth in Asia--country by country and as a whole--and the techniques of economic journalism. On this latter aspect of the dual theme the seminar ended with three major observations:

(1) To remove the appalling want of economic information and resource material in Asia, some kind of a service agency is urgently needed;

(2) IPI should begin efforts in collaboration with the Japanese Press as well as with the Institute of Asian Development and Planning in Bangkok to organise training courses for economic writers;

(3) Chinese newspapers now preoccupied with commercial news need special assistance to develop writers on economic affairs.

Follow-up

A group of newsmen in Japan, Hongkong and the Philippines has become active on the suggestion for an agency to supply resource material to economic editors. They are now busy working out the cost and operational outlines for an agency that will be modest and practical, but can hope to get subscribers even among academic institutions and business houses.

Some members of the seminar while on their way back home talked with the Director of the Institute for Asian Development and Planning in Bangkok if his Institute could cooperate with IPI for organising training courses. On the question the Asian Programme is now corresponding with Mr. Narayan Prasad, Director of the IADP.

Meanwhile, the Information office of the ECAFE in Bangkok and the Development Department of U. N. in New York expressed interest in the outcome of the seminar.

The Asian Development Bank has made it known that the Bank may help with us, should we plan a sequel of the seminar in Manila.

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