

SPEECH BY TUAN HAJI YA'ACOB BIN MOHAMED, MINISTER OF STATE (PMO) AT THE OPENING CEREMONY OF A THREE-MONTH COURSE ORGANISED BY THE MALAY JOURNALISTS' ASSOCIATION AT AL-MALIK FAISAL HALL, LORONG 12, GEYLANG ON SATURDAY, 1 MAY 76. 3.00 P.M.

I am very happy to be here today to inaugurate this three-month course organised by the Malay Journalists' Association. I understand that the course, scheduled to cover all aspects of journalism, should prove both timely and useful at this juncture in accordance with the need of the development of our mass media.

A wide range of members of professional expertise has been called for the course, both from newspapers and foreign news-agencies as well as the radio and television network. I would like to thank all the lecturers involved in the course work for having come forward and given of their time in order to share and learn their skills and ideas in the cause of better journalism in the Republic.

The printed word in the newspapers, magazines and other publications can exercise a great power over the minds of men. Newspapers, especially, thus have a far-reaching, wide-ranging influence over the general populace in any country, for most people tend to accept unquestioningly whatever is printed and voiced in the papers. It follows, then, that all those directly concerned with the presentation of news and views in a newspaper and other publications must of necessity be possessed of high standards of honesty, integrity and responsibility.

This training course, I am sure, will seek to engender high ideals in both the philosophy and practice of journalism in our Republic, besides imparting and seeking to develop the knowledge and technical skills necessary in the sphere.

Journalism and the mass media in general represent today one of the biggest challenges in national development in the countries of the region. Under the aegis of ASEAN, journalists in member countries are already started on programmes aimed at widening their horizons and creating new in-depth understanding of the crucial roles they can play in promoting peace, progress and mutual problem-solving.

It is all to the good, therefore, that the different units of our newspaper and mass media world engage in seminars and training courses like the one being launched today. Only in this way can we hope to go on broadening and deepening both the journalist's vital role in the region and his understanding of what that role is and should be, in ideal terms.

The concept of "balanced reporting and writing", for example, is a journalistic ideal of supreme importance, in the national context specially as well as the larger regional sphere generally. The journalists striving to realise this concept in their work must be at pains to ensure that they are well acquainted with the realities and informed of the national and regional panorama of action that unfolds before their eyes. Training and experience must both combine to make them keenly aware, finely sensitive, highly responsible, so that the perspective of their vision will always reflect, undistorted, the truth of any given situation.

As Singapore is a multi-racial society, the need for this kind of vision becomes all the more imperative. Local journalists of the different language media must strive to meet in understanding and awareness on home ground just as surely as they strive for a meeting of minds in regional matters.

But the profession which journalists pursue is a hectic, constantly changing, day-to-day matter of fast-breaking news and rushed deadlines. Conscious, planned effort is necessary therefore to ensure that our journalists stay one step ahead of the rush all the time, reserving always within themselves the capacity to think, analyse, truly reflect in all fields and avenues. Courses and seminars, well planned in depth and scope, are one way of doing this.

It is therefore with great pleasure that I now declare open this Training Course.

MAY 1, 1976.

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