



Summary of the 19th General Assembly

Confederation of ASEAN Journalists

Bangkok, January 24-28, 2018

The 19th General Assembly of the Confederation of ASEAN Journalists (CAJ) was hosted by the Confederation of Thai Journalists in Bangkok on January 24-28, 2018. It was attended by representatives from the *Vietnam Journalists Association (VJA)*, *National Press Club of the Philippines (NPC)*, *Indonesian Journalists Association (PWI)*, *Lao Journalists Association (LJA)*, *National Union of Journalists Malaysia (NUJM)*, *Creative Media and Publishing Union of Singapore (CMPU)* and *Confederation of Thai Journalists (CTJ)*.

Attending as observers were representatives from the *Club of Cambodian Journalists (CCJ)*, *Myanmar Journalists Association (MJA)*, and *All China Journalists Association (ACJA)*.

The assembly was co-chaired by CAJ President Mr. Thuan Huu and CTJ President Mr. Thepchai Yong. In his opening remarks, Thepchai Yong welcomed the delegates and observers and thanked them for their support and contribution. He also expressed his appreciation for the leadership of Mr. Thuan Huu whose presidency of CAJ was instrumental in making CAJ a more dynamic regional media organization.

AGENDA NO. 1: Induction of Club of Cambodian Journalists (CCJ) as new CAJ member

The 9th General Assembly formally accepted CCJ as the eighth member of CAJ. CAJ members offered their congratulations to the CCJ delegates and CAJ President Mr. Thuan Huu presented the CCJ delegation headed by its Secretary General Mr. Puy Kea with a formal letter of acceptance.

In his acceptance remarks, Mr. Puy Kea thanked CAJ for accepting it as a new member of the "CAJ family" and expressed hope that CCJ will work together with CAJ in further advancing the role of CAJ amidst new challenges in the fast-changing media landscape.

Secretary General of Myanmar Journalists Association (MJA) Mr. Kyaw Swa Min, who was invited to the General Assembly as an observer, informed the General Assembly that MJA intended to apply for CAJ membership as soon as possible.

AGENDA NO. 2: Confirmation of nomination of new Board of Directors

The General Assembly confirmed the nomination of the new Board of Directors for 2018-2020 as follows:

President: Thepchai Yong (Thailand)

Vice President: Teguh Santosa (Indonesia)

Secretary General: Mr. Damrit Viriyakul (Thailand)

Directors:

Club of Cambodia Journalists (CCJ):

Kea Puy

Delux Leang

Indonesian Journalists Association (PWI):

Otto Munaf Iskandar

Dar Edi Yoga

Lao Journalists Association (LJA):

Vorasack Pravongviengkham

Thonglor Duangsavan

National Union of Journalists Malaysia (NUJM):

Mohd Taufek Razak

Chin Sung Chew

National Press Club of the Philippines (NPC):

Rolando Gonzalo

Paul Gutierrez

Creative Media and Publishing Union (CMPU) of Singapore:

Mindy Kwok Sin Thang

Confederation of Thai Journalists (CTJ):

Chavarong Limpattamapanee

Mongkol Bangprapa

Vietnam Journalists Association (VJA):

Ho Quang Loi

Dinh Thi Thuy Hang

AGENDA NO. 3: Report on CAJ activities

CAJ Secretary General Mr. Ho Quang Loi presented to the General Assembly a report outlining activities of CAJ under the presidency of VJA in the past two years. Highlights included a training course on “Journalism With the Effects of Changing Climate” in Hanoi on September 28-30, 2016 for journalists and editors from 8 ASEAN countries, a study tour on the topic “The Achievements of Vietnam After 30 Years of Renovation” for 10 CAJ journalists on November 6-11, 2016 in Hanoi and Danang, and a photo contest on the topic “ASEAN – One Community” with the awarding ceremony held in Hanoi on December 29, 2016. Among other important activities was a meeting of the Working Group set up under the “Hanoi Declaration” in Vientiane on July 7, 2016 and the meeting of the Board of Directors in Jakarta on January 6, 2017 which came up with proposed amendments to the CAJ Constitution and a series of initiatives designed to make CAJ more dynamic and in tune with changes taking place in the region. The CAJ Fan Page has also served as an effective forum for exchange of information among the CAJ member countries in the past two years.

AGENDA NO. 4 Briefings on ASEAN media situations by CAJ representatives

CAJ delegates and observers to the 19th General Assembly each gave a briefing on the media situation in their countries:

Cambodia

Kea Puy, Secretary General of CCJ

Cambodia has seen a major expansion of mass media in the past years, raising the number of media outlets to more than 500, which include foreign-owned companies making up about one-third of the total. Despite negative news reports about the media situation in

Cambodia, Cambodian media can still carry out their journalistic duty without much problem as long as they try to be objective and professional.

Prime Minister Hun Sen recently organized a gala dinner, inviting 3,400 journalists and their spouses. It was the second annual mass gathering between journalists and the Cambodian leader since 2017. The prime minister used the occasion to criticize the spread of fabricated stories and accused news outlets critical of his government of spreading fake news.

Cambodia has been having problems with fake news, prompting CCJ to organize training courses for journalists to raise their professionalism to deal with the issue of fake news. CCJ has been a leading journalists association in Cambodia since its inception in 2000, with a core mission to help train journalists to be professional in their field of work and to help protect freedom of expression.

Indonesia

Teguh Santosa, Chairman of International Affairs of the PWI

Indonesia media and journalists are facing challenges from fast-evolving media platforms. According to the Indonesian Communication and Information Ministry and the Indonesian Press Council, there are currently around 43,000 internet-based media outlets in Indonesia, along with 2,000 printed media outlets, 674 radio stations and 523 television channels.

Most of the media, especially the cyber ones, are considered not trustworthy enough to be categorized as professional mass media. The phenomenon of media “tsunami” in Indonesia is coupled with the spread of hate speech, fake news, and also increasing plagiarism. In return, this situation drops the level of trust on media reports.

Since last year, the Indonesian Press Council has begun the process of validating the media outlets in the country with an objective of protecting and upholding the professionalism of the Indonesian press.

Until December, 2017, there were only 950 media companies registered with the Press Council, where only 171 media companies have been verified and categorized as being professional media. The details are 101 print media outlets, 22 television stations, 8 radio stations, and 40 cyber media outlets.

Other than the validation of media companies, since at least five years ago, the Press Council has begun the journalist capability examination at the national level. Until December, 2017, the Press Council has issued competence certificates to 11,811 journalists. As many as 2,551 competence certificates were given in 2017 alone.

The Philippines

Paul Gutierrez, President of NPC

The Philippines mainstream media are also facing similar challenges common in most societies -- fake news, hate speech and a decreasing advertising revenue. The TV5 Network Inc. will be shutting down the operations of its online news portal InterAksyon as a cost-cutting measure. Meanwhile, employees at CNN Philippines, were reportedly given a lay-off notice as part of the network's "rightsizing program", The National Union of Journalists has expressed concern about the layoffs, the latest in a series of mass firings that have seen hundreds of media workers become unemployed.

Last year the Philippines National Press Club came up with a programme to aid young journalists by providing them with subsidies for housing and school fees for their children as well as medical services.

Singapore

Ms. Kwok Sin Thang General Secretary, Singapore National Union of Journalists Branch of CMPU

Singapore National Union of Journalists is the organization protecting media in 7 sub-sectors including TV, media, game sector, radio media, music, digital media , online media and print media.

Press freedom is a responsibility exercised by journalists and editors on behalf of the public. The most important role of journalists in a democracy is to inform the public about events, issues and opinions which might influence the decisions people take about their lives and the society in which they live

And the situation in Singapore is just like media in other countries in the sense that digital media are playing much bigger role. The media today face new challenges in a rapidly changing world. The media are very much affected by the emergence of internet technologies. These technologies have sparked the growth of citizen journalism such as YouTube and multi-media blogs with instant outreach and the power to shape public perception and reaction. The pressing debate today is whether the traditional media, what some has called the mainstream media, will survive the onslaught of the new media technologies.

Today, advertising is shifting to online. Recently, Singapore Press Holding signed an agreement with Samsung in a strategic partnership that will allow users of new Samsung smartphones, tablets and television sets to read digital newspapers on The Straits Times and

Singapore's leading Chinese-language daily Lianhe Zaobao apps already downloaded on their devices when they get them.

The Singapore media are not immune to challenges posed by the new media. Singaporeans have in fact embraced the new media technology with many younger Singaporeans setting up their own blogs, and updating these regularly for their readers, and treating blogs and other new media platforms as sources of news and information. There is no doubt that the Singapore's mainstream media will respond to the changes in media consumption patterns and the attraction of new media so as to retain and grow newspaper readership and TV viewership.

Laos

Savankhone Razmouny, President of LJA

The media in Laos plays a key and crucial role in shaping and promoting socio-cultural and economic development. It informs the public about government policies and criticizes what goes wrong in the implementation of those policies. It gives a voice to the people. It is at the forefront of all campaigns to improve people's lives, protect the environment and promote peace and stability.

The Lao media is experiencing its own challenges with regard to the simultaneous development of globalization, the information explosion and the rapid changes in technologies and methodologies used to generate and propagate information.

Media is at the centre of all information generation, information dissemination and information interpretation. Currently, however, some mainstream media outlets in Laos have enabled real-time access and telecast of events recorded in audio, video and multimedia content via the internet, but others have not yet caught up with the new technologies.

In this regard, the Lao Journalists Association would like to share some ideas about dealing with some of the problems in our media industries of today, in particular about the necessity for our media to follow their ethics and to be more professional to avoid the spread of fake news that causes misunderstanding in the society as well as to overcome all the challenges in order to be accurate and reliable for the public.

Malaysia

Chin Sung Chew, Vice President of NUJM

Malaysia is facing the common issue of fake news while print media are not doing well as far as advertising income is concerned. Many media companies have downsized to save costs. Two of Malaysian's major media companies, The Star and The New Straits Times have introduced so-called Voluntary Separation Scheme (VSS) or a Mutual Separation Scheme (MSS) to their employees.

Even adopting the on-line platforms is no easy solution for most media firms. The subscription approach seems not be working as most news consumers expect on-line information to be free. Many are, therefore, facing financial difficulties. There are no other choices but to keep the businesses going through cost-cutting, knowing full well that the future for print journalists is not very bright.

Thailand

Thepchai Yong, President of CTJ

The Thai media are facing difficulties on two fronts. The first one is the political front. The past three years have seen tight control on the press under the military dictatorship. Things were worse in the aftermath of the military take-over as journalists who offended those in power with their writings could be called in for the so-called "attitude adjustment". Now, journalists have to exercise "self-censorship" to avoid confronting the military.

The second one is the business front which could be even a much bigger challenge. The media landscape in Thailand has been transformed by the rise of on-line media like in most other countries. But it has been compounded by the sudden explosion of digital television. From 6 TV stations, Thailand has overnight seen a jump to 24 TV stations. The result has been a fierce competition for the same advertising pie.

The consequence has been a sudden downturn in business for most media companies. Downsizing and lay-offs have become the order of the day for most of them. And since most broadcasters and on-line news providers are preoccupied with rating and clicks to keep revenue flowing, there is a serious concern about the quality of their news services. It's a big worry that this will have a long-term effect on media professionalism.

Vietnam

Ms. Dinh Thi Thuy Hang of VJA

We face challenges on how to improve the quality of news contents, combat fake news, and corruption in the media organizations. Recently, VJA (Vietnam Journalists Association) has adopted devices to monitor on-line media that publish fake news or sensational news in order to make monetary profits before deleting it. The devices are

designed to keep tab on these activities and to find out which on-line outlets take up the news and whether they profit financially from it.

Myanmar

Kyaw Swa Min, General Secretary of MJA

The history of Myanmar media started 172 years ago when the country's first newspaper, The Maulmain Chronicle, was published and followed by the creation of Burma's first Burmese-language newspaper and in 1946 the formation of Burma Journalists Association

Zaw Than, Member of Press Council

Myanmar media are facing the same problem of fake news and hate speech like in most other countries. The Myanmar government has set up a media committee to counter fake news and also investigates and settles press disputes, compile code of ethics, and protects media personnel as well as to respond to complaints against the media. It was set up as an independent body involving privately-owned media representatives.

China

Ms. Wang Lu, Director of English News Department of China Radio International of ACJA

The Chinese media landscape is similar to those in other countries in terms of the co-existence of and competition between traditional and new media and various attempts at convergence. One of the challenges is the quality of contents circulated on on-line platforms and how to sustain serious journalism.

Last year, China Radio International signed an agreement (the first of its kind) with Tencent, a Chinese holding conglomerate whose subsidiaries specialize in various internet-related services and products, entertainments and technologies, to provide licensed high-quality contents for customers. By working together with growingly responsible internet companies in a way that maximizes the strengths of both sides, the media in China remain confident about coping with the changes and challenges that lie ahead.

AGENDA NO. 5: Adoption of CAJ Charter amendments

The General Assembly unanimously adopted amendments to the CAJ Charter as proposed by the Working Group and endorsed by the Board of Directors. Heads of delegations of all the 8 CAJ member countries then signed the amended CAJ Constitution.

AGENDA NO. 6: Signing of Bangkok Declaration

The General Assembly unanimously adopted the Bangkok Declaration which lays out the vision and mission of CAJ for the next two years. The CAJ President, Secretary General, Permanent Secretary and heads of the delegations of all the 8 CAJ member countries signed the Bangkok Declaration.

AGENDA NO. 7: Adoption of Action Plan for 2018-2020

The General Assembly unanimously adopted the Action Plan for 2018-2020 to realize the vision and mission laid out in the Bangkok Declaration.

Other matters:

The 19th General Assembly paid special tributes to Mr. Kamphol Vacharaphol, the late founder of the Thairath Daily, Thailand's largest-circulation newspaper, who was named by The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) as a UNESCO Eminent Personality of the World for Education and Mass Communication in its General Conference session in Paris in November 2017.

In his presentation to the General Assembly, Mr. Chavarong Limpattamapanee, President of the National Press Council of Thailand and director of CAJ, said Mr. Kamphol was recognized for his devotion to promoting education by building schools in rural areas of Thailand. Mr. Kamphol began his journalistic career in 1947 before founding his own newspapers which were subsequently closed down for political reasons. He later founded Thairath in 1962 which continues to be Thailand's leading daily newspaper. During his entire life, he gave strong support to the work and activities of professional media organizations, including the Confederation of Thai Journalists. He died of cancer at the age of 77 in 1996.

Closing remarks by CAJ President Mr. Thuan Huu

In his closing remarks, CAJ President Mr. Thuan Huu said opinions and proposals put forward at the 19th General Assembly will help build a strong CAJ as "an information bridge" among countries in the ASEAN Community. He said the Bangkok Declaration is an

affirmation of CAJ members' determination to consolidate the organizational structure and encourage activities that will lead to solidarity, cooperation and development in the ASEAN Community. Welcoming the Club of Cambodian Journalists as the eighth member of CAJ, Mr. Thuan Huu said CAJ serves as a bridge for countries in the region.

Mr. Thuan Huu offered thanks to all CAJ members for their cooperation during the Presidency of VJA and pledged support for the Confederation of Thai Journalists as the new president of CAJ to make CAJ a "more influential organization" in the region.

Transfer of CAJ Presidency

Outgoing CAJ President Mr. Thuan Huu formally transferred the presidency of CAJ to CJT president Mr. Thepchai Yong in a ceremony joined by all delegates to the 19th General Assembly.