ASEAN COMMUNITY: THE LEGAL CHALLENGES IN ACHIEVING MEDIA DIPLOMACY IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF REGIONAL INTEGRATION AND EMPOWERMENT

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Abstract
In the era of integration, media plays a crucial role not only limited to conveying information and progress but also important to potray the image of an integration such as ASEAN COMMUNITY. While ASEAN is known for its diversity, media landscapes in ASEAN countries are also diverse and uneven. This had actually explained why it is extremely difficult to offer a general image of the regional media. In addition to that, this has been the main attribute hampering discussions and closer collaboration throughout these years in media-related activities, especially in setting common norms and standards of media practice. Although it was claimed under the charter, and the region's political-and-security and social-and-cultural blueprints, the need to promote the free flow of and access to information as well as the role of media in promotion of ASEAN identity and awareness in community-building and integration efforts, ASEAN leaders have yet to make serious efforts to push forward this platform. ASEAN community had always been 'a work in progress' and this is mainly due to the fact that ASEAN itself carries 10 different set of rules and laws thus making the road to achieve the integration of an ASEAN Community remains a big challenge. Therefore, this paper aims to provide an overview of the diversity of media landscape which includes the Freedom of Expression and the Right to Information in ASEAN member countries and the barriers in achieving media diplomacy for the sake of the development of regional integration.

Keywords: *ASEAN, ASEAN community, diplomacy, integration, media.*

KOMUNITI ASEAN: CABARAN PERUNDANGAN DALAM MENCAPAI DIPLOMASI MEDIA DALAM PEMBANGUNAN DAN PEMERKASAAN INTEGRASI SERANTAU

Abstrak
Dalam era integrasi, media memainkan peranan yang penting namun demikian ianya tidak hanya terhad kepada penyampaian maklumat dan laporan namun ianya juga adalah penting dalam menunjukkan imej sesebuah integrasi seperti Komuniti ASEAN. ASEAN sememangnya terkenal dengan perbezaan daripada setiap sudut, dan ini termasuklah landskap media yang begitu berbeza dan tidak sama dalam setiap negara-negara anggota ASEAN. Senario ini sebenarnya yang menyumbang kepada kesukaran dalam mewujudkan satu imej media rantau. Tambahan kepada itu, keadaan ini juga telah menyebabkan ianya menjadi sukar untuk mengadakan pelbagai aktiviti berkaitan media, terutamanya dalam meletakkan peraturan dan standard am dalam amalan media. Walaupun menurut *Blueprint* politik dan sekuriti serta sosial dan

budaya terdapat penekanan untuk mempromosikan pergerakan bebas dan akses kepada maklumat dan juga peranan media dalam mempromosikan identiti ASEAN serta kesedaran dalam pembinaan komuniti dan usaha integrasi, namun demikian para pemimpin ASEAN dilihat masih gagal untuk melakukan gerakan yang serius tentang perkara ini. Komuniti ASEAN sentiasa dirujuk sebagai satu yang "di dalam proses" dan ini adalah disebabkan oleh keadaan di mana negara anggota ASEAN mempunyai 10 set perundangan yang berbeza menjadikan perjalanan menuju integrasi Komuniti ASEAN kekal sebagai satu cabaran yang hebat. Oleh sebab itu, perbincangan ini bertujuan untuk memberikan satu gambaran keseluruhan tentang perbezaan landskap media dan ini termasuklah kebebasan bersuara dan hak kepada maklumat di negara-negara anggota ASEAN, serta halangan-halangan yang timbul dalam mencapai diplomasi media bagi tujuan pembangunan integrasi rantau.

Kata kunci: *ASEAN, komuniti ASEAN. diplomasi, integrasi, media.*

INTRODUCTION

Undoubtedly, the media is a strong channel which interconnect the world. Not only media play a role of reporting news nationally, the media also play a crucial role in conveying news globally. The power of media is the main propeller of propaganda that has seen certain powers attain and maintain their position in world politics. This would obviously make the media as an opinion shaper as well as an agenda setter. In the era of globalization, with the high international dependency and competetiveness, media diplomacy serves a crucial role in winning local and international masses (*Lwangu, 2013*). Among the many reasons of the importance of mass media to a society, the most notable ones are; that the media are the source of information that people need to make informed choices and decisions (*Fortunato, 2005*) as well as serving as a channel to achieve mass communication (*McQuail, 2005*).

Media play an important role in conveying information and this had helped ASEAN to make sense of integration and regionalism under the rubric of the ASEAN Community. Furthermore, the media had also played a crucial role by reporting in-depth and with quality regarding the content and position as well as progress of individual ASEAN member states. Taking note of the diversity of ASEAN member states, the media coverage of ASEAN member states varies accordingly based on editorial policies, target audiences, ownership as well as management. Nevertheless, while having media on a national basis might seem helpful, most print and broadcast

media had always been focused on national issues making regional issues as secondary. As a result, the quality of media coverage in ASEAN remains disparate and mostly focusing on national interest.

While having to state the obvious, media landscape in ASEAN are diverse and uneven. This had always been a barrier for discussions and collaboration especially in setting common norms and standards of media practice *(Chongkittavorn, 2013)*. It is undeniable that the media play a major role in the integration process. Therefore, this paper will discuss about the challenges that the media have to face in order to achieve media diplomacy to ensure regional development and empowerment. The discussion will start of with Part 1 discussing on the role of media in the integration process. While having known for the role they are supposed to commit, it is also important to look at the reality of the current position in ASEAN, therefore due to the diversity of the media landscape in ASEAN, part 2 of this paper will give an overview on the realm of media in ASEAN. In addition to that, part 3 will focus on the readiness of national media in liberalisation and will be focusing on the current position in Malaysia. On top of that, part 4 of the paper will provide recommendations for the success of ASEAN community. Last but not least, part 5 will conclude the paper.

THE ROLE OF MEDIA IN THE INTEGRATION PROCESS

The question arises as how important does the role media plays in the integration process. As many may contend the little contribution the media might have done, the media actually have a very crucial role in terms of providing important information and analyses upon which people will base their decision and choices *(SID, 2011)*. It also helps to build the capacity to assist in the formation of public opinion by setting and building public agenda (*McCombs and Shaw, 1972*). Apart from that, media are also important to help mobilize action or activity on various issues by providing reports and analyses of events and information (*Protes et al, 1991*).

Though it had been submitted and believed the crucial role media could play in an integration process, it is also undeniable that the role that the media plays are very limited due to cultural backgrounds, different laws and policies among member

states, and the diversity in national political and economic achievements may suggest how effective the integration process is. Therefore, it is very crucial to critically discuss the role of the media in the integration process.

While discussion on the objective of regionalism may have been too mainstream, the reason of integration may seem obvious; to widen and deepen economical, political, social and cultural integration in order to improve the life of people in that particular region (*Mushega, 2006).* There are several actors who are considered as a key to integration and regionalism and this includes the media which is responsible to help make sense on behalf of the public on the meaning of integration and regionalism as well as drawing attention to the opportunities and challenges the state have to face. The role that media have to play may include conveying ideas of regionalism and integration, how the regional body actually works, and the benefit that the citizens of member states may receive would actually bring greater regional consciousness (*Garza, 2009*).

There are various theoretical arguments to show the impact the media have on society and among them are agenda setting and building (*Lang and Lang, 1983*), mediating between society and state (*Habermas,1986*), watchdogs (*Curran, 2002*), mobilization (*Process et al., 1991*) and also reinforcement (*Heath, 2005*) of particular viewpoints. Agenda setting as well as agenda building of the media relates to the notion that the media will always successfully tells us what to think about rather than what to think by carefully selecting the content, placement and the framing of language to publish (*McCombs and Shaw, 1972*). People normally do not consume everything that is "thrown" at them by the media, rather they are selective in choosing what to consume based on their needs. This means that the consumers are actively choosing and using the media. Apart from that, the media holds that people are influenced by the writing they consume although there are other contributing influences that may determine the people's decisions, behaviour, attitudes, beliefs and motives. These influence agents may include political, state, and non-state actors like government official and civil society whose deeds, views and statements in the media may influence people's perspectives on integration [*Nabi & Oliver, 2009*]. In relation

to this, the media also play the role as a watchdog by monitoring state activity and without fear exposing abuse of official authority [*Curran, 2002*]. While in the agenda setting role, the media helps to convey the goings-on in society, acting as a watchdog the media ensure the wrongdoings are being informed to the public and the wrongdoers are subjected to relevant action. The media act as a mobile to the public, civil society, professional bodies and other actors to demand action against the wrongdoers [*SID, 2011*].

Therefore, based on the discussion, it can be claimed that the media actually played an important role and is seen as a bridge connecting the public with the authorities of the state. In referring to integration, the media could place a big assistance in conveying the relevant information on the impact and effects of integration as well as giving an overview of the journey in making integration a success.

THE REALM OF MEDIA IN ASEAN: DIVERSITY OF MEDIA LANDSCAPE
While most of the member states are still struggling to ensure the Freedom of Expression and the Right to Information, it is undeniable that the region is facing different kinds of challenges among member states due to the variety of scope and scale. In addition to that, it is almost impossible to compare and contrast on both the Freedom of Expression and the Right to Information between ASEAN members because this group of states is politically, socially, economically as well as religiously disparate. ASEAN Member states are different from the political spectrum; from democratic and transitioning countries to highly repressive single party regime. Furthermore, the most obvious disparity is on the economic level of member states; from a prosperous high-income nation to middle income nation and to the poorest end of the spectrum (*Reang, 2014*).

Freedom of expression and the right to information are crucial in a society where public participation contributes to development. According to Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights – the freedom to speak and express opinions, and to have access to government-held information is a universal human right legally

protected in state constitutions across the globe (*UDHR*). Nevertheless, in Southeast Asia, the ability to freely express and exchange ideas, including information and opinions by the public is under perennial threat (*Reang, 2014*). As for instance, Singapore controls its citizens' the right to speak freely through regulatory measures; an online news site with at least 50,000 visitors per day are required to obtain an annual license. In addition to that, any related citizen is required to remove any content that is considered to be questionable by the state within 24 hours (*Associated Press, 2013*).

There are actually high priority issues that contributed towards great threat to Freedom of Expression and the Right to Information across the ASEAN region. Firstly, there is a serious regression in Media laws and policy related to Freedom of Expression and this may relate to Internet policy and cybercrime laws. Apart from that, there are also violation of rights of journalist in terms of reporting on sensitive and critical issues such as conflict and democracy. Journalist and human rights defenders are the target for the proliferation of new laws as well as enforcing existing regulations specifically to control online activity (*Reang, 2014*). As for instance, Thailand was the only in the region that faced a status change from 'Partly Free Internet' to 'Not Free' internet, this is one example of an aggressive enforcement of laws which restrict any speech that is deemed to be offensive towards the monarchy (*Kelly et al., 2013*).

On top of that, it is also important to note that the Right to Information is fundamental to freedom of expression. Without information, the citizen will not be occupied with true facts and are clearly unaware of their rights. Though the Right to information laws are generally slow, besides Thailand and Indonesia- the only two countries which have enacted the law, several ASEAN countries have also drafted such laws. Above all, the Right to Information laws demonstrates a demand for greater transparency and accountability among governments. Nevertheless, optimum momentum and political support are needed to ensure the full adoption of such laws (Reang, 2014).

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While ASEAN leaders are too busy in the run to achieve regional integration in realizing the pledge to forge people to people connection, unfortunately for the media sector, there is no such thing as an ASEAN media (Chongkittavorn, 2013). Media organisations are always in a special relationship to the states and politics, in other words the media have to be in line and have to be based on the legal framework set up by legislation, i.e the politics. However, due to the functions of the media in spreading information, the political actors tend to use the media for their own interest because there are possibilities to use media for agenda setting and framing public opinion (Korff, 2014).

Media credibility is very important to ensure the content and information spread by them are relevant and trusted (Kiousis, 2001). The failure to obtain trust to the news spread by the media will directly affect the media capabilities to convey information and news to the public and will have to possibly tarnish the freedom and the economy for the media (Gaziano, 1988). With the rise of information democracy in the globalization process, a media institution should be liable for its content publish (Azmah & Samsudin, 2013).

Nevertheless, media organization depends much on economic resources and they are a means to generate income (Korff, 2014). Based on this, the relationship between the media and the state is somehow justified as they need the state i.e politics actors to survive the industry and generate income, which means the media will always be controlled by people with power to control to the economy of a particular state.

The degree of integration and legal convergence in relation to media in ASEAN member countries is far lower than in the European Union. In the EU, the integration process started since 1980s and came with closer cultural cooperation in order to enhance empathy and understanding and this is well appreciated by the EU citizens. There are joint TV and radio programmes which were established on bi-lateral level (Korff, 2014). Unfortunately, in ASEAN, the Southeast Asian journalist is still working on to establish an ASEAN Press Council that would be able to

promote greater regional media interaction and better understanding of ASEAN issues. It is irrelevant to materialise the ASEAN Community without the active participation of the media community (Quratul Ain, 2013).

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Discussion shall be narrowed down to each and every member states of ASEAN to observe the realm of media in those particular member states.

Thailand

Thailand is the second state in ASEAN to enact such laws on freedom of information. However, the freedom of expression is controlled by the fact that whether the media either in favour of or opposing the ruling party. The Thais have a set of varied choices and means to receive news and information, though television remains the most preferred option. The government however is in full control of all six terrestrial TV stations, which practically means that the information conveyed through the TV stations are biased towards the ruling party. Thai Public Broadcasting (TPBS) was initially believed to be a source of neutral and independent news. However, even TPBS has attracted controversy and debate as to its political impartiality (*Reang, 2014*). The Broadcasting Act does not apply to government channels, making the state powerful enough to have substantial control over the content of programs (*Korff, 2014*).

Vietnam

The Vietnam media sector is actually very vibrant and diverse. The country has more than 700 news agencies, more than 850 newspapers and magazines, 66 TV and radio stations, 80 online newspapers and thousands of websites (*Frontiers, 2013*). Nevertheless, in being a champion with numbers, the fact that Vietnam news and information are strictly controlled by the state is undeniable. Due to this, many former journalists had chosen to be an online blogger to cover issues that would never be mentioned by the government-controlled news outlet. Though the government is swift in punishing bloggers, journalist with traditional, state-owned or allied media are also open to face severe consequences if caught reporting issues deemed to be critical of the government. Among the issues that trigger the government reaction are those on

government corruption, illegal land seizures and sensitive environmental issues (*Loi, 2012*).

Cambodia

Cambodia's country information system is dominated by a partisan press and a broadcast media owned by the ruling Cambodian People's party. Nevertheless, the saturated mobile phone market had provided opportunities for the citizens to receive and share information. Cambodia has very few media advocacy and those existed does not reach to the standard of the most effective in promoting freedom of expression (*Reang, 2014).*

Laos

Laos's media are fully state-controlled. Journalists are controlled and will avoid covering controversial issues and have very limited Internet penetration, making Laos press status as 'Not Free' (*Karlekar KD & Dunham J, 2013*). Laos's 2008 press law was considered as ineffective as it fails to give protection towards journalists. The country 32 television stations and 44 radio stations are government affiliated. In addition to that, 24 newspapers in Laos are also strictly controlled by the government (*Reang, 2014*).

Philippines

The Philippines has one of the most active media scenes in the region with myriad print, radio, TV and online platforms competing to obtain the attention of a highly educated and information-hungry public. A major strength of the Philippines press and the unique situation of the media situation here is the readiness of the media organisation to defend the rights of media practitioners and press freedom. The existing laws in terms of press freedom are a major factor in order to sustain this. Nevertheless, the dominance of local media-focused organisation and an overwhelming lack of international organisation and aid agencies had underscores Philippines' maturity and self-sustaining in terms of Freedom of Expression network (*Reang, 2014*).

Indonesia

Indonesia's Constitution had laid down both the right to privacy as well as the right to gain information and communicate freely. As referred to the passage of Indonesia's 1999 Press Law media oversight played a key role in ensuring lasting reform. Despite the freedom that was given to the Indonesian press, the strong nationalist and religious narratives in the country had actually limits the freedom of expression (*Reang, 2014*). In Indonesia, TVRI (Television Republik Indonesia) are politically involved and act as the mouthpiece of the government while RCTI (Rajawali Citra Televisi Indonesia) are more audience oriented (*Korff, 2014*).

Myanmar

While having an open door towards independent media, there are still controls over content and attacks by the press. In accordance with the country's constitution, every citizen may exercise their right to "express and publish their convictions and opinions." Nevertheless, this is upon the circumstances that the publication is not contrary to the laws enacted for Union security, prevalence of law and order, community peace and public order or morality (*Reang, 2014*). The Government and the military own and operate all domestic broadcasting in Myanmar, although they are fully funded, they also carry commercial advertising (*Chadha & Kavoori, 2000*). Broadcasting in Myanmar is still under strong control of the government or tycoons connected to it (*Korff, 2014*).

Singapore

Though Singapore online population may seem to be competitive, Singapore's information environment remains tightly controlled. As according to the Singapore's constitution, Article 14 upholds the freedom of speech and assembly, while having such freedom, the citizens are still controlled in order to protect the country's scrunity, public order, morality and racial as well as religious harmony. Two government companies dominated the traditional media. Given the regulatory environment, journalist and the citizens of Singapore exercise self-censorship in Singapore (*Reang, 2014*).

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Brunei

Brunei journalist and citizens are under tight government press control. In 1991, the Sultan of Brunei had introduced the Malay Muslim Monarchy ideology which presents monarchy as the defender of the faith. The government also urges the citizen to avoid '*DRUMS*'- i.e distortion, rumour, untruth, misinformation and smears- in social media. With the government clear boundaries around freedom of expression and the degree of political control had stifled the emergence of a significant community pushing for an expanded space in order to openly share information (*Reang, 2014*).

Based on the discussion above, it is fair to note that almost all member states media in reality is generally controlled by the government. The government puts strict restriction in ensuring that news on the bad side of the government is not publish to the public and to the world at large. While this may seem to be good enough to avoid chaos, nevertheless it is biased. In terms of the dream to successfully build a regional integration, this government action in covering national issues will make the integration a long road to ride. Restricting the Freedom of Expression and the Right to information will only give birth to citizens with minimal knowledge and obviously not critical thinking. The ASEAN member states need to revise their practice of restricting these freedoms and at the same time must ensure that the public order is under control.

National Media Towards Integration: Position in Malaysia

It is a fact that one way information will not contribute to the development of the society (Azizah, 2009). It is a fact that Malaysia is among the most democratic and diverse in terms of religious beliefs in ASEAN context. During Tun Mahathir's era of leadership, the government Multimedia Super Corridor was created. In relation to that, the Communication and Multimedia Act was passed by the Parliament, of which includes a section that states no part of the Act shall be construed as censoring the Internet. Although the government had vowed to keep the Internet free since the 1990s, the regulatory environment remains restrictive (*Reang, 2014*). According to Article 10 of the Constitution, guarantees freedom of speech and assembly, nevertheless as mentioned before the Parliament had constitutionally restricted the

said freedom as it deemed "necessary or expedient" for the sake of public order and national security (Federal Constitution).

In terms of legislation, there are actually a few media related enacted laws, among them are the Printing Press and Publication Act 1984 (amended in 2012) actually grants absolute discretionary power to the Home Minister over licensing of printing presses. In addition to that, the Communication and Multimedia Act 1998 in turn had given the Minister of Information, Communication and Culture a wide range of licensing and other related powers. On top of that, the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission are allowed to instruct any website to remove content, due to this the Internet users' practice self-censorship. Furthermore, the Evidence Act had been amended making social media users and bloggers an easy target while the Sedition Act 1948 allows imprisonment up to 3 years for any act, speech or words that are deemed to incite hatred towards a ruler or to promote feelings of animosity among different races and classes (*Reang, 2014*).

Malaysians can actually express themselves freely online, but they are restricted with certain caveats. Malaysia is well known for its diversity of population and religion, including Muslims, Buddhist, Christians and Hindus. With the diversity of society, this had helped Malaysia to become one of the most vibrant societies in the region. Nevertheless, it is important to note that while this diversity may seem vibrant, these consequences are also endangering ethnics and create religious tensions that define national-level politics and set up religion-based curbs on free speech. Furthermore, there are actually undeniable inequalities on access to information in Malaysia. For instance, the mobile phone signal reception is extremely limited in the East Malaysia (*Reang, 2014*).

As mentioned before on matters of self-censoring, based on the regulatory environment in Malaysia, this had led the TV, radio and newspaper practice self-censor. The main broadcaster in Malaysia known as Radio Televisyen Malaysia (RTM) acts as a mouthpiece for the ruling party. Though there are other channels and radio broadcasters, yet even these are heavily influenced by the ruling party. Apart from that, Malaysia's print media also shares the same characteristics as the broadcast

media- many of the newspapers and magazines are owned by the ruling party. Most of the journalist conveyed information and news, keeping in mind that they are supposed to be aware of what they are publishing due to the fear of losing their license. Furthermore, two states in Malaysia- Selangor and Penang passed the legislation on the right to information. However, in October 2013 the Penal Code was amended makes it an offense for civil servants to share any information about their work, which directly challenge the provisions enacted in the Right to Information legislation (*Reang, 2014*).

Therefore, it is clear that the position in Malaysia does not carry any major distinction from the position of other ASEAN member states in terms of the media realm. Clearly, the power of the ruling party of any state, including Malaysia plays a major role in determining how the media should operate. The question of liberalisation of media is obviously out of the picture. Malaysia, as mentioned before is obviously knows as a multi-racial country, this among others had always been the reason to control any publishing which may in any way touch on the sensitivity of any religion or ethnic group. In order to ensure peace and avoid chaos, the control seems legit. Nevertheless, in order to achieve the success of integration, this situation needs to change. The majority control of a ruling party in any state will only make integration a far reach ambition.

Recommendations for the Success of ASEAN Regional Integration

While having more commercialize media of which does not have any connection with the ruling party of any particular member state, the news and/or information published by them may not always be positive in driving the integration forward. Instead, news that sells will be given priority since they are doing business and looking for profit.

Normally, news regarding conflicts between states or tensions in any individual states will be given extra coverage compared to a positive issue that may promote the integration process (*SID, 2011*). Due to this, the ASEAN member state shall consider investing in a media organisation, preferably an independent and professionally-run news agency that can broadcast in ASEAN. While the organisation is an independent body, the language used by them must be understood by all of the ASEAN member

states. Apart from that, having an ASEAN-owned news agency could advance the integration process and integrationist ideology. This would definitely come to a success for the ASEAN region if there is sufficient funding and the agency is free from interest of any individual member state.

In addition to that, the ASEAN member states should also consider enlisting media houses and other organisation such as civil society and professional bodies in the ASEAN region to be more proactive in promoting the regional body. Apart from that, the ASEAN member states should also consider hiring people with connections in existing regional media houses as well as competencies to acquire close and effective working relationships among the ASEAN member states, journalist and the media. With news conveyed from a body such as this, people are more likely to accept and digest as compared to a state-run media agency where most of the time be seen as a propaganda tool. Apart from that, ASEAN member states should consider holding a regular workshops and training center sessions for media personnels. This is for the sake of preparing the media on the importance of regionalism and integration. Moreover, it is obvious that the media should place stringent editorial policies favourable to the development of an ASEAN integration process. With encouragement to the media to engage more issues related to integration process would definitely educate the media managers on the integration benefit to them as an individual and also to their business. A regional market would only bring greater access to resources, employment opportunities, free movement of goods and services and most importantly larger viewership, readership and listenership to the media sector.

While many might argue on the realisation of an independent body to operate and report the news regionally due to budgetary challenge, the ASEAN member state should consider and take this matter seriously to ensure the objective to create an ASEAN community a success. While having a state-controlled media might seem sufficient and safe for a particular state, it is a whole different story when regional integration is in the picture. A nation's interest is no longer the main agenda and concern.

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CONCLUSION

In conclusion, in order to achieve an ASEAN Community the ASEAN member state need to work extra hard especially in promoting the integration. People nowadays are relying heavily on the media to get information. By having a state-controlled media landscape will never make an integration a success since every individual state will be so busy covering sensitive issues of their own. ASEAN member states should really go beyond that and to start promoting the benefits of integration, such as the benefit of an open market, how investors can actually invest in the ASEAN region and how labor mobility could facilitate the ASEAN citizens. While knowing the diversity of ASEAN member states, having a common law might seem impossible, but that does not mean that it could not be achieved.

The media landscape in ASEAN should really be liberal. Having said on liberalisation, this does not mean that the citizens of ASEAN can freely comment and condemn on every single issue there is. The media should be responsible for conveying positive information to educate the people. This also does not mean that only positive issue can be published, nevertheless the media should be selective in the news they are to publish and must ensure that the information or the news they provide is for the benefit of the integration.

Therefore, the ASEAN member state should be very open in order to achieve media diplomacy. The issue of Freedom of Expression as well as the Right to information is a crucial issue to handle by the member states, each individual member state should really consider on letting their national interest and issues out of the picture in order to achieve a successful regional integration.

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