Media in Philippines, Asia slammed for narrow-mindedness

By LOUI GALICIA
ABS-CBN Europe News Bureau

Asian media has failed in delivering news about the region, mainly because it is narrow-minded and limited in scope, reports ABS-CBN Europe News Bureau.

The weakness of Asian media is just one of the topics debated at the 4th Asia-Europe Foundation’s Asia Europe Journalists’ Seminar on May 27 in Hamburg, Germany.

“We fail. We fail because media in Asia is very parochial”, Kavi Chongkittavorn said in his speech as a panelist representing Thailand.

The executive editor of Bangkok’s The Nation newspaper said, “When we report, we report our self, we report what is linked to us and then this self- censorship is based on non-interference.”

He added that this kind of reporting in Asia is an unwritten rule. “So you don’t write about sensitivity, about leadership. Let alone other more sensitive issues like racial or religious issue.”

He also said that Asian journalists have a mindset, which is fixed on a certain issue. “Media in Asia mainly pick up topics on community building in Asia from America and less from Europe, because Europe has so many to write about its integration,” Chongkittavorn said.

Even the Filipino media was not spared from harsh criticism. The Singaporean panelist found that there is a trend in news reporting in the Philippines that is focused on high politics.

“There’s a tremendous amount to what I will call high politics. You know. Who’s going to become the president? What will the congress do? What will the senator do? What background does he or she have,” Asad-ul Iqbal Latif told ABS-CBN’s Balitang Europe.

The visiting Research Fellow at ISEAS said that as a reader, he really wants to find out about the real Philippines. He wants to read the news about the country that is a collection of so many people and so many languages.

If the Filipino media as in media in other countries... If they have to become closer to the people then they should put the unseen, the unheard and the unthought-of in the limelight and not to be so fixated with high politics, high economics, scandals, Latif said.

Latif added, “I think the Philippines, if I may so as a friend of the Philippines, is a complex country. It is not as simple as the news headlines make it out to be. It’s not always a question of the fight between good and evil.”
He also denounced the spate of journalist killings in the country. “Terrible not because they’re journalists but because they’re citizens. And to the extent that a journalist gets killed while trying to do his or her job is a reflection on the entire system.”

17 senior journalists from ASEF-member countries were invited to the seminar to discuss the theme “Strategic Issues in Asia-Europe Relations: Perspectives from the Media.”

ABS-CBN Europe News Bureau represented the Philippines. The other Asian participants are from: Khemara Times, Cambodia; Wenhui Daily, China; The Times of India, India; Deccan Herald, India; Gatra Weekly News Magazine, Indonesia; Al Jazeera International, Malaysia; UB Post, Mongolia; The News, Pakistan and Tiemphong Newspaper, Vietnam.

The European participants are from: Standart News Daily, Bulgaria; Danish Broadcasting Corp., Denmark; Der Tagesspiegel, Germany; Kathimerini, Greece; The Irish Times, Ireland; Lrytas, Lithuania and Radio Romania, Romania.

The Asia-Europe Journalists’ Seminar series serves to enhance the flow of information and exchange of perspectives among policy makers and eminent senior journalists from Asia and Europe on strategic issues facing the two regions.

It is a forum for the journalists to be updated on current world developments and concerns being addressed by the ASEM process, and the joint approaches being taken to deal with them.

“Media people are very, very important simply because they play a key role in connecting and bridging civil societies in Asia and Europe and also connecting people in Asia and Europe. That is why we believe that media programs for Asians and Europeans will continue to be priority for ASEF,” Ambassador Wonil Cho said.

ASEF’s executive director also lauded the work of the media.

On the European side, the Asian journalists got a very clear view of the progress of the European Union integration which has become a very unique model that the ASEAN countries had been closely watching.

The EU now has 27 member countries, with Croatia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey still awaiting future membership.

German panelist Matthias Nass voices a strong opinion on Turkey’s future and inclusion of Russia in the EU.

“People should be careful about Turkey. I don’t see that happening anytime soon. America is against it. [French President] Sarkozy is against it. The whole development seems to be running against it,” the deputy editor-in-chief of German newspaper Die Zeit said.

And then somebody mentioned Russia. If you want to kill the process of EU integration then you try to bring Russia. This is nothing we should really aspire for. Russia is a world power in itself. It will be too much for Europe to integrate Russia. It will not be wise to do that,” he said.
Guest of honor during the seminar was EU Director General for Asian and Pacific Affairs Andreas Michaelis who assured the Asians that the European Union will play a vital role in Asia.

“ASEM countries from Asia represent sixty percent of the world population, sixty percent of world trade and sixty percent of economic output...an importance that should be reflected in the political approach to the region. But also at the same time as a consequence of importance of economic needs, certainly security becomes important,” Michaelis said.

“Europeans themselves do not live up to U.S.-style hardware of security but it will characterize, it will flavor the kind of role of Europe and I think that is essential. If Europe wants to play a role in Asia, it has to become part of the Asian agenda. And it is not part of the Asian agenda if it lacks one of the fundamental characteristics of the main actor in the region and that is why security is important,” Michaelis said.

Michaelis, however cautions that Europe will not force itself in Asia.

“I think we are well advised of our own limitations and not make the mistake that out of reasons of vanity or whatever reason is involved, we are trying to squeeze our chair at the table in order to say that we are present wherever we can be present. I think it’s much more important to see that we are present where we can give added value to a certain political process,” he said.

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Farmers oppose spa resort on Taal
Inhabitants of the world’s smallest active volcano are up in arms against the impending construction of a resort spa on their island by a Korean-owned company, calling the attention of the national government to what they described as “a classic case of land grabbing.”

Farmers and locals warned of a violent eruption if municipal authorities and the Regional Mobile Group (RMG) evict them from their land to make way for the Taal Volcano SPA Resort project of Jung Ang Intevnture Corp.

Resting Dimayuga, president of the Samahan ng mga Mamamayan sa Lawa ng Taal (SAMATAAL), said it remains a mystery how the Korean company managed to secure permits, including the environment compliance certificate (ECC) from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), to put up a resort spa in a huge portion of the volcano.

“We have been here in the island of Taal since the 1920s and we have tilled the soil from then on. We will not allow any corporation to take away our land; we will defend it to death,” Dimayuga said.

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Jack Gaisano: Gold is sold cheap
Aside from narrow coastlines, limestone plateaus and coastal plains, the Queen City of the South also proudly rears a shopping mecca that blends in with Cebu’s highly urbanized metropolitan core.

The Gaisano family started fostering retail operations in 1982 with the Vicsal Development Corp. (VICSAL). Its inception was through the vision of Victor Gaisano, a seasoned retailer and one of the revered members of the Gaisano family. The Gaisanos owned and managed the former White Gold Department Store, the first department store and supermarket business in Cebu. White Gold lasted for 30 years and became the largest of its kind since its establishment in 1949.

Through the leadership of Jack Gaisano, president and director of VICSAL, the company has rapidly grown into a multitude of successful ventures. VICSAL also penetrated the world of real estate development, travel agency, stock brokerage at the Philippine Stock Exchange, banking and other financial services.

At present, VICSAL operates six department stores with supermarkets like the Super Metro Mandaue, Metro Ayala Center, Metro Legaspi, Metro Lucena, Metro Market Market and the Metro Gaisano Colon in Cebu.
Rare RP snakes fly home to Batanes

BASCO, Batanes – Fifteen months after they were taken here to be brought to Malaysia, 12 snakes that can be found only in these islands were returned here on Tuesday morning.

The reptiles, known as Batanes pit vipers (Trimeresurus mcgregori) belong to the threatened and rarest snake species in the Philippines. They are endemic to the Batanes Group of Islands, specifically in Batan (mainland Batanes) and Sabtang islands.

George Reyes, Provincial Environment and Natural Resources officer, said the 12 snakes are part of the 129 reptiles of various species confiscated by a joint team of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR)-National Capital Region’s Wildlife Traffic Monitoring Unit, the Bureau of Customs and authorities at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA) on March 16, 2006. Steven Toledo of the DENR’s Protected Area Wildlife Bureau, who led authorities in bringing home the reptiles, said they were to be exported to Sungai Zoo in Penang, Malaysia via a Thai Airways plane.

"Timely detection of the illegal shipment prompted airport authorities to intervene," Toledo said.

Elementary head teacher in Batangas under fire

By TRINA LAGURA

A grade school teacher is being accused of maltreatment. But he said the complaints are results of mere "misunderstanding."

Head teacher Romeo Ramos of Banaba Elementary School in Padre Garcia, Batangas, is being accused of punching a grade school pupil in the stomach and imposing severe punishments to seven others on June 5, the first day of school.

Artist paints another picture of Sibugay

By ADRIAN AYALIN

The calm waters of Sibugay Bay and the quaint living of Sibugaynons were rudely awoken by the abduction of Italian priest Giancarlo Bossi in the coastal town of Payao. Suddenly, the province of Zamboanga Sibugay made it to the headlines on June 10 as a dangerous place for foreign missionaries.