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# Medialink: New Program To Promote Asia- Australia Media Exchange

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The Asialink Center at The University of Melbourne has established a new media program, *Medialink*, to link media in the Asia-Australia region through information and personnel exchanges. Part of the program will see Australian media workers and students working in Asian news organizations and vice versa.

*Medialink* was launched in Melbourne in December by Indonesian editor Mr Gunawan Mohamad, founder and editor of the news magazine *Tempo* which was banned in 1994 but defied the government by going on-line until it was allowed to resume publishing in 1998. "We should not underestimate the importance of exchanges. Creating this exchange program is commendable," said Gunawan, best known for his writings against the Suharto Government.

The program will offer fellowships of up to \$A12,000 each for in-country residencies for three to 12 months. The fellowships provide an opportunity for media personnel – producers, script writers, photographers, technicians, reporters – to be exposed to the politics and culture as well as media technology and procedures of another country in the region.

*Medialink* will also initiate opportunities for Australian/Asian media personnel to visit Asia/Australia for lectures, conferences or training; and will facilitate short-term work placements for Australian/Asian journalism students and lecturers in Asian/Australian news organizations.

In April, the program will launch a media information network to facilitate regional contacts between news organizations, media associations and unions, advocacy and help groups and academic institutions involved in media training.

*Medialink* is one of four programs managed by The Asialink Center which aims to strengthen Asia-Australia relations and enhance public understanding of Asia in Australia and vice versa. The others are in education, arts and public affairs programs.

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*Medialink* will provide three main services:

**Media facilitator**

*Medialink* helps facilitate media personnel exchanges, for example:

- advertise and initiate opportunities for Australian media personnel to work in Asia and vice versa,
- facilitate visits by Asian/ Australian media personnel to Australia/ Asia,
- help media personnel undertake university degrees in other parts of the region,
- facilitate short-term work placements for journalism students and lecturers.

**Information database**

*Medialink's* website database, to be established in April, will include:

- regional news organisations (publishers and broadcasters), media associations/unions, advocacy and help groups, academic institutions and scholarship providers,
- media events of interest, such as regional conferences, workshops and seminars,
- publications including journals and recent books dealing with the media in the region.

**In-country residencies**

The residency program will include:

- all categories of news media: newspapers, magazines, radio, television and on-line facilities; and
- all categories of media personnel: editors, producers, script writers, photographers, artists, camera crews, advertising personnel and technicians as well as reporters.

Exchangees will work for their host news organisation, and where possible will live with a host family or colleague. Existing programs allow for Asian media personnel to visit Australia for conferences, familiarisation tours, work experience. *Medialink's* facilitator role will complement such programs.

The expected benefits of the residencies include increased awareness of the host country's political, economic, social, cultural and religious features; increased contacts in the media and the host country generally; and more highly developed professional and personal skills.

No fellowship will provide 100% of the cost of an in-country residency – the exchangee or his/her employer are expected to contribute part of the residency, for example, all or part of the employee's salary during the residency. This is to ensure

commitment on the part of the exchangee and his/her employer. The amount provided by *Medialink* will vary, depending on the circumstances of each applicant, but fellowships will not exceed \$A12,000 each except in special circumstances. Funding will not be extended, but exchangees can remain in the host country after the residency ends at his/her own expense, subject to arrangements with his/her home and host news organization.

At least three fellowships will be available during the first round (ending 31 March 2000). Fellowships to and from India and Indonesia are assured, thanks to funding from the Australia-India Council (AIC) and the Australia Indonesia-Institute (AII). An additional fellowship has been provided by The Myer Foundation and can be used for an Asian media person to undertake a residency in Australia or for an Australian to choose any Asian country. Selection will take place during April by specially chosen selection committees in each country, drawn from the news media, business, academia and the arts.

Generally, Australian exchangees will be placed with English-language newspapers / magazines, or radio / TV stations with English programs. However, exchangees fluent in an Asian language can apply to work for an indigenous news organization in the relevant country.

Preference will be given to Australian media personnel who have traveled, studied or worked in Asia, or can demonstrate an interest in or relationship with Asia; and those who are able and willing to impart knowledge and skills acquired in the host country to colleagues as well as the general public through their writings / broadcasts / photos.

Asian exchangees will be selected on three criteria: they must be fluent in English and be prepared to work in a fast-moving, all-English environment (such as a news room) where colleagues may not be experienced with English as a second language; preference will be given to those who have studied, traveled or worked in a Western country; and preference will be given to those who are able and willing to impart what they have learnt to colleagues as well as the general public.

For application forms, conditions and more information: check the website: [www.asialink.unimelb.edu.au](http://www.asialink.unimelb.edu.au) or email: [medialink@asialink.unimelb.edu.au](mailto:medialink@asialink.unimelb.edu.au) or [asiamedialink@hotmail.com](mailto:asiamedialink@hotmail.com)

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