

INFORMATION NOTE

Measuring Press Freedom in Southeast Asia

1. Background

1.1 In the meeting on 26 September 1997, Members of the Panel on Information Policy requested the Research and Library Services (RLS) Division of the Provisional Legislative Council Secretariat to study whether the government or the legislature in South East Asian countries sponsored any independent research on measuring press freedom in the past few years.

1.2 The RLS Division sent relevant enquires to the governments of Singapore, Thailand, the Philippines, Indonesia, and Malaysia. All the four countries, except Malaysia, responded. The findings of the study are summarized below.

2. Findings of the Study

2.1 No government or the legislature of any of the four countries -- Singapore, Thailand, the Philippines, and Indonesia -- has sponsored any independent research on measuring press freedom in the past few years.

Country	Sponsoring Studies on Press Freedom in the Country	
	Government	Legislature
Singapore	No	No
Thailand	No	No
Philippines	No	No
Indonesia	No	No
Malaysia	Not available	Not available

Singapore

2.2 Neither the Singapore government nor the Singapore Parliament has sponsored any independent research on measuring press freedom in the past few years.

Thailand

2.3 Neither the Thai government nor the Thai legislature has sponsored any independent research on measuring press freedom in the past few years. The official explained that since journalists in Thailand can freely criticize the Thai government, the issue of press freedom is not considered as a concern.

The Philippines

2.4 Neither the government nor the legislature of the Philippines has sponsored any independent research on measuring press freedom in the past few years.

2.5 The Philippine government said that it takes Article 19 of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights as the principle of press freedom. The Philippine government explained that the Constitution of the Philippines guarantees human rights and freedom of speech, and that its Article XIII provides for the promotion and protection of human rights, which mandated the creation of the Philippine Commission on Human Rights, an independent body. The Commission monitors the government's compliance with international treaty obligations on human rights.

Indonesia

2.6 The diplomatic official of the Indonesian government indicated that there is no need for the Indonesian government or the parliament to sponsor any independent research on measuring press freedom. He explained that in 1966, the Indonesian government published the Press Act of Indonesia which permits free expression in the country. A copy of the Press Act of Indonesia (in English) is available in the Provisional Legislative Council Library for reference.

Malaysia

2.7 No response has been received from any government agency or the legislature of Malaysia.

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