

**Engaged Learning  
Special Joint Issue**



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**The Journal**

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**Development**

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**Communication**

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NUMBER 1-2 • VOLUME 25 • DECEMBER 2014  
PP6725/01/2013 (032028) • ISSN 0128-3863



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16/10/2018

# The Journal of Development Communication

NUMBER 1-2 • VOLUME 25 • DECEMBER 2014

PP6725/01/2013 (032028) • ISSN 0128-3863



PUSTAKA PERDANA



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### Cover of this issue

Assam, a state located in north-east India, is famous for its tea, oil and silk production. It is also famous for its beautiful cultural dances such as the Bihu dance. The origin of this folk dance locally known as Bihu Nittya is not really known, but it goes back to 1694 when the Ahom king Rudra Singha used to reign over Assam. King Rudra had an entertainment hall in his Palace called Rang Ghar and he used to invite dancers to perform in the presence of his beloved Queen Rangila Bihu. Since then, the dance became known as the Bihu dance.

The Bihu is a group dance where both males and females dance together. The musician and male dancers enter the dancing area first, maintaining their lines and dance in a synchronised pattern. Afterwards, the female dancers enter the dancing area, and dance in a circle formation. Both genders then mingle with each other but somehow, female dancers do not break the circle. The dance is characterised by specific postures as well as movements of the hips, arms and wrists.

The beautiful dance is performed with Bihu music. It includes Dhulia drummer, who plays a twin-faced drum called the dhol with one stick or his palm. There can be a number of Dhulia in one performance. Before the dance starts, the Dhulia will perform a rhythm where the main singer will sing a solo song to create the mood or atmosphere. While many of Assamese culture, including festivities and arts, have changed or destroyed by alien rules, Bihu dance manages to continue its original tradition.

Text by: Hasina Bashar  
Illustration: Rosman Mustaffa



Hasina Bashar is a final year student of Law, studying at a British University. Along with her law studies, she has a keen interest in local languages and culture.

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Tel: (603) 5522 3599

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The Journal of Development Communication is published by Aidcom  
in collaboration with University of Selangor (UNISEL),  
Faculty of Communication and Media,  
Shah Alam, Selangor, Malaysia

Printed by:

BS Print (M) Sdn Bhd

No, 10, Jalan Ingrahana 1, Off Jalan Kuchai Lama, 58100 Kuala Lumpur

Printed on acid free recycled paper

Request for permission to reprint any material should be directed to  
Aidcom, Faculty of Communication and Media, University of Selangor,  
Jalan Zirkon A 7/A, Section 7, 40000 Shah Alam, Selangor, Malaysia.

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# The Journal of Development Communication

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Authors and publishers are welcome to send books and other publications related to development communication for review. Two copies are required for this purpose.

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## REGIONAL SEMINAR ON EMERGING NEEDS AND WELL-BEING MEASURES AND INDICATORS

12 May 2015

Hotel Bangi-Putrajaya, Selangor, Malaysia

*Organisers:*

**Poverty Eradication Foundation (YBK)**  
**Institute for Social Science Studies (IPSAS), Universiti Putra Malaysia**  
**Asian Institute for Development Communication (AIDCOM)/**  
**Universiti Selangor (UNISEL)**

Poverty Eradication Foundation (YBK), an active NGO with the vision to become a premier, and effective organization in the eradication of poverty, in conjunction with its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary, is collaborating with Institute for Social Science Studies (IPSAS), UPM to organize a conference on future development needs of nations regionally through measurement of subjective well-being as an indicator to measure holistic human development. Furthermore it is to motivate researchers and practitioners to undertake research and implement policies on well-being based on suggested recommendations and adoption of best practices identified across regional nations.

Nine keynote speakers will be invited to make presentations on the state-of-the-art of interpreting and measuring well-being as well as show-case their national and project experiences with regard to adopting well-being concepts in their development and planning activities. The suggested keynote speakers are representatives from Malaysia, Bhutan, Indonesia, Thailand, Singapore, Philippines, and UNDP.

Those who are interested to attend should complete the registration form and send it to the Seminar Secretariat before 1<sup>st</sup> May 2015.

### CONTACT

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# EDITORIAL

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For this issue of the Journal Development Communication, we decided to combine articles we received as well as the proceeding from a conference Aidcom held in June this year called Engaged Learning and ICT for Development in the University Curriculum. The conference was jointly organised with Universiti Selangor (UNISEL) in association with Cornell University of the USA, and the United Nations Asian and Pacific Training Center for ICT for Development (UN-APCICT).

The first part of this journal starts with an article written by Eric Freedman and Richard Shafer on the development of press systems in former Soviet Republics of the Baltics, Caucasus and Central Asia. The article provides a comprehensive comparative study on the development of press systems in countries such as Lithuania, Latvia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Tajikistan, particularly towards press freedom and freedom of expression.

Another article is by Farish Ullah Yousafzai and Kasim Sharif who conducted a study on how the Pakistani Urdu press frame India in their reports, especially on the peace process between the two countries. They analysed articles in two Urdu dailies for a period of one year and their study confirmed their hypotheses that India is often portrayed as foe rather than friend in Pakistani press. They concluded that the media of the two countries can play their role in resolving the conflict between the two countries via media diplomacy.

The third article was submitted by Eko Harry Susanto on communication patterns, and its role towards development and to achieve a country's vision. It is based on the perspective of the Riau Province in Indonesia and contains the challenges, especially communication barriers that hamper the efforts of reaching Vision 2020 Riau.

The second part of this journal contains the papers presented by speakers at the conference mentioned above. In total, there are 10 papers in this section, including one by Prof Emeritus Royal Colle of Cornell University who described the steps on how to develop a student guidebook for university ICTD learning. The section also includes a paper by Stephen Chen of Hong Kong Polytechnic University on how the university developed its service learning curriculum across multiple disciplines, as well as on how the students of the university are pursuing their service learning projects. Service learning is also known as engaged learning.

This part also contains a paper presented by Ma. Theresa H. Velasco from University of the Philippines Los Baños, who described how her university established development communication curriculum from undergraduate to graduate level. The section also contains several case studies on engaged learning, such as the two projects done by students of the Mahasarakham University in Thailand as well as the e-Bario project in Sarawak by students of Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS).

We at the editorial board of the JDC wish our readers, contributors and subscribers a very Happy New Year!



# A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF NATIONAL PRESS SYSTEMS IN THE FORMER SOVIET REPUBLICS OF THE BALTICS, THE CAUCASUS, AND CENTRAL ASIA

*Eric Freedman*

*Richard Shafer*

The collapse of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) in 1991 created hopes for many, both within the crumbling empire's borders and in the West, that newly independent ex-republics would make a rapid transition to democratic governance and respect for human rights, including a free press and freedom of expression. Although almost a quarter-century has passed, those expectations have largely failed to materialise in twelve of the fifteen former SSRs, including all those in Central Asia and the Caucasus. We consider these countries to be “repressitarian”—both repressive in human rights practices and authoritarian in governance (Freedman et al., 2010). The three exceptions are the Baltic countries of Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia.

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***“Geographic proximity to countries with relative press freedom and other press traditions helps explain why the Baltics moved in one direction after 1991 while Central Asia and the Caucasus stayed close to the Soviet attitude toward the mass media and constraints on free expression. Although bordered to the east by Russia and Belarus, residents of the Baltics—especially those who are not of Russian ethnicity—are much more likely to turn toward the Nordic countries, Germany and further westward for news, information, and entertainment. During Soviet times, the Baltics were more apt to host anti-communist dissidents and outlawed underground publications known as samizdat, as well as citizens who clandestinely listened to news transmissions from the West and had access to smuggled Western publications.”***

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The longtime operative premise in Western society is that press freedom and independence are critical components of democratic, transparent governance essential to the success of other institutions of civil society. Whether those expectations were ever realistic, even in the heady early years following independence, or n



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