

# SEAFORE Masterclass 5

Sat, 10/23 2:34PM • 3:42:56

## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

corruption, southeast asia, asean, issue, journalists, philippines, country, region, government, question, stories, indonesia, corrupt, malaysia, investigative journalism, thailand, anti corruption, investigative journalists, problem, singapore

## SPEAKERS

Dr Torplus Nick Yomnak, Tess Bacalla, Muhammad Adib Faiz, Carmela, Cynthia Gabriel, Ajinder Kaur, Dr Nadirsyah Hosen, Danny Yong, Tessa Bacalla, PH Asia Dem Chronicles

### **Danny Yong** 00:04

I think perhaps we should just start is, you know, my part is 5/10 minutes anyway, so then people would have trickled in

### **Muhammad Adib Faiz** 00:12

sure.

### **Danny Yong** 00:18

So welcome everybody. Welcome Tess, Dr. Nadir, Cynthia, Nick, thank you for joining us. The rest of our journalists, friends will be coming in as they come in. So I'm the warm up Act, the 510 minutes before the main offering. So I'm Danny, I'm from kiniacademy. I'm the CEO. We, we are a part of the MalaysiaKini group. Can you move the slide, please? Yeah, so kiniacademy is part of the MalaysiaKini group. Yeah, we are the training arm. We, obviously then one of our offering is journalism training in which we spend a fair bit of our attention on investigative journalism. And we also administer small grants for journalism who wants to journalists or like minded individuals who want to investigate some stories and pursue some stories we have, we have many funders who have very kindly worked with us to allow these grants to happen. We are also working on collaborating with ASEAN partners to get the conversation going among ASEAN news rooms, right. And this is one of our efforts, seafore. So seafore is supported by IWPR Institute of war and peace reporting, they're based out of London. And they are actually an American outfit. And the office that we work with is actually based out of Washington, DC and Manila. Alright, so they have they support local reporters, citizen journalists, civil society, activists in various countries in conflict crisis and transition. So let's move on. We thank you very much for for the support. So seafore, as a project, seafore stands for Southeast Asia forum for reporting. So it's very, it's a it's quite driven by and focused on the reporting function. So journalists, our focus, so the journalists of ASEAN apparently do not collaborate enough? Yeah, I have many reasons for that, that I hear, you know, language, and being one of them. So this effort, aims to bring journalists

together with two overlaps, so to speak. So one of the overlap is all the journalists who are in the project tend to be reporting from the same desks. Therefore, they have a lot more in common with the other journalists of different countries. And the other overlap will be the subject matter. So we ASEAN related topics, obviously then becomes relevant to all the ASEAN journalists reporting in this desk. And that's the two overlaps that we are we are banking on that we hope to have journalists start conversation with each other. Okay. And so this supposed to be sustained going ahead. So CFO has got a few few components. One of the components is master class, this master class, now we have five series, frankly, we do aim to have a few more. We working on that. And master classes are basically on other topics. Today being one of them. I share a bit more of this. The second part will be reporting the law yet. The second part will be the reporting project. So each one of the publications in ASEAN that's partnered in our, in this project, will actually be pursuing a story project. Okay, and there's the third component, is the conversation. Right? So we look to start conversations across ASEAN. So there's a whatsapp group with journalists from all over ASEAN newsrooms who are in there. And that's where we actively encourage conversation. So thanks, Next please. So as you can see, our four superstars who are attend today to share with us their perspective on corruption. Tess is who we are depending on to drive the conversation forwards and keep it interesting. Dr. Torplus or Nick from Thailand, Chulalongkorn University, Cynthia Gabriel from C4 from Malaysia, and Dr. Nadir and from University of Monash Indonesia. So as you can see, we try to we bring we're trying to bring ASEAN voices to the fore To have them contribute their perspective to this conversation now to move the ASEAN agenda forwards. Next, please. Next please. So some of you who know already who's attended before, let's try to put your, your mics on mute, mute, and have your name with your organization in your profile name so that we know where you're from. Okay, just added, like how I put my kidney Academy after my name. Alright, we do encourage you to leave your video on. But more importantly, this is the time to ask your questions. If we if it's not for your stories is to enrich your knowledge and to keep the conversation going. Alright, and of course, I think you guys as you sign in, you know that the share session is being recorded. Okay. With this recording will be made available. c four.org, is our website where we house the previous recording from previous master classes, the slides are available as well. And the transcripts will also will also be made available after a few days when we worked out the kinks. Alright, so it's c four.org. Our previous master classes are all up there. All the all the profile of our speakers out there as well, for journalists attending this masterclass this, your new sources, your new expert that you can talk to, and today's opportunity. Alright, let's go to the next slide. So, I think Do we have the people results already added? Or should we?

**Muhammad Adib Faiz** 06:50

Yes, Yes, we do.

**Danny Yong** 06:52

Okay, great. Wow, great, thank you for the seven responses. When we ask how often journalists cover issues relating to corruption, you know, almost 70 80% of you say a lot, or sometimes it is a rather big issue in our individual countries, isn't it? Let's move up, Amelia, are you with the academy approach to analyzing corruption? So similarly, we have at least 70 80% who are not so familiar, that one and two, so I guess Nick has or Dr. topless has got a section that I was looking forward to. And that probably sheds some light on this. Let's go. How important is the issue of corruption in your country? So yeah, it

looks pretty clear that we are we are we all we most of us think is pretty important. in your country, which area of life is most affected by corruption? civil service rank right on top. And the next chunk will be politics, economy, economy, social stock structures and legal system? Yeah. To what degree does your country collaborate with other Southeast Asian countries to combat corruption? We right in the middle right here. And this is actually one perspective that I would love to hear a bit more from the speakers. No individual countries already battling have a big, biggest war to fight. You know, how do we how do we? How do we collaborate across the borders to to help reduce this next piece. So good, we have more participants in already. Let me introduce Tess, who's going to help us with with with the session. So Tessa, she is currently the project lead, and editor in chief of the Asia democracy Chronicles, region wide initiative spearheaded by the Asia democracy network. She is an award winning journalist, editor, media consultant is based in the Philippines. She's written on issues ranging from public governance, corruption in government, to women, children, and migrant labor. She's also edited books and other publications for institutions, including John Wiley, the Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia, and the Philippine Institute for Development Studies. So Tess, you take over.

**Tess Bacalla** 09:41

Thank you, Danny. Hi, everyone. Thank you, too, for this opportunity to be with you today in this important discussion around corruption in Southeast Asia. So my main task is to do the opening presentation on corruption in our region. So let me screen share. Now. My presentation. Okay. Oh, sorry. Hey, having a bit of I tried it earlier. Sorry that just wait a bit. Sorry about that. Why don't I okay, I'll just try and I don't know what when I test a bit earlier and it was working, but let me just anyway.

**Ajinder Kaur** 10:48

I'll just click on share screen, does it? Open Windows?

**Tess Bacalla** 10:55

I did the but let me just check that so

**Muhammad Adib Faiz** 11:05

alright. So you can, Cynthia, what you do is you open the PowerPoint first on your desktop Tess No, no, no, sorry.

**Tess Bacalla** 11:16

Yes, it's open actually.

**Ajinder Kaur** 11:22

When you say, share, they'll give you an option to pick the

**Tess Bacalla** 11:27

I got that. Just see

**Ajinder Kaur** 11:31

Are you using the Google Slides. I'm

**Tess Bacalla** 11:34  
using keynote. Yeah. Okay.

**Ajinder Kaur** 11:47  
Can you just email the slides to answer any one of us can

**Tess Bacalla** 11:51  
share, right? Oh, yeah. Yeah, I didn't click the present. Yeah. Okay. Great. Sorry about that. Okay, I um, so I titled it understanding corruption in Southeast Asia, a journalist slant. So just a bit of disclaimer, I don't claim to be an expert on the extent and you know, how the, the issue of corruption plays out in the whole of Southeast Asia, but from what I have seen, and as an investigative journalist, and also in my former role as regional editor for some major publications in Asia, I think I've seen enough of how corruption plays out in the region. But I'll be drawing on my experience as a former investigative journalist with the Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism, or PCI j in the Philippines. Yeah. Okay. Let's let me provide a bit of a backdrop to what I one of the things I wish to highlight in my short presentation. The Bureau of internal revenue in the Philippines, which is the or the BI ar e, it's the top tax collecting arm, or the main tax collecting arm of the Philippine government is one of the most corrupt agencies in the country. So many years ago, up until I released my series of reports, it was a three part series on the BI AR. There were there were a lot of rumors circulating about circulating around the the extravagant lifestyles of many tax revenue officials. And I thought it was high time we did the report about this issue mainly to shed some light on what's really going on in the region and why the BIR, the Bureau of internal revenue was considered one of the most corrupt actually what up it's one of one of the most corrupt agencies in the Philippines, one of which the other being the Bureau of Customs. Okay. So the my report the three part series was titled bureau officials, the IRS officials amassed unexplained wealth. It was it took me at least six months to do the research. And I had with me a team of researchers who helped me obtain the obtain some of the voluminous documents I needed to be able to determine the unexplained wealth of the world the alleged unexplained wealth of many big officials. So I look into the houses expensive, the fleet of expensive vehicles, business interests of at least 25 Brr. officials and employees. In the Philippines, civil servants earn a modest income relative to cap compared to the private sector they earn significantly less so it's always a red flag went up public official or a public employee is, you know, is known to have expensive vehicles for example, or Ay, ay, ay, or a big house in some posh subdivision or village in the Philippines. So I looked into this. And then, yeah, so what came out was that many of the officials I investigated, even after I obtained their statement of assets, for example, could not explain adequately, how they acquired their assets, including shares in businesses and companies. And we found out also that bi our postings are so lucrative that many of them would petition a change in their birth records, if only to delay their retirement, which meant, the longer you stayed in the Bureau, you know, the more opportunity to generate unexplained wealth. So that's that's essentially what happened. So, in this three part report, I wanted to show also, the, I mean, to lend credence to the allegations of unexplained wealth, but at the same time, explain to the reading public, how systemic corruption within the Bureau was, I mean, became possible. What were the breakdowns, for example, in the systems of checks and balances,

that made corruption in the bureau. So the three part series that I wrote for PCI j concluded by looking at the breakdown in the systems of checks and balances in the BI are the lack of transparency, the lack of oversight and accountability, all of which contributed to making the bureau one of the most corrupt government agencies in the Philippines now I highlighted some places here, systems of checks and balances lack of transparency, because these were reflective of the, of how corruption essentially was taking place in the Philippines. In other government institutions. There were also similar, similar flaws, the absence of checks and balances, or even if they were in place, they were not really being implemented. The lack of transparency is not unique to the DIR, but also applies to other government agencies in the Philippines. For example, I later on I looked into the local city, local government units, for example, in one of the biggest cities in in the Philippines, or one of the well actually one of the wealthiest in terms of revenue being regenerated by businesses. But I found out similar flaws, the lack of transparency, the lack of oversight, the lack of accountability. I would say that what I saw in the BI er, when I did this story, again, this is not unique to the Bureau. This is not unique to the Philippines, but well elsewhere in in Southeast Asia, there are similar challenges are taking place, the absence of checks and balances, the lack of transparency, the lack of oversight and accountability. Among the most forms, common forms of corruption in the Philippines that I think also applies elsewhere in Southeast Asia, our bribery and facilitation payments, fraud, favoritism, and undue influence, nepotism, extortion, and conflict of interest to name a few. Even these days, we see these kinds of corruption taking place. For example, fraud has been leveled against one the Department of Health in the procurement of medical supplies for frontline health workers. Now, I'm moving into Southeast Asia, I mean, looking more broadly at the region. It's interesting that notwithstanding the massive spread of corruption in our region, there are supposedly systems that are in place there are anti corruption agencies, for example, across the region, you have these in Cambodia. There's one in Indonesia, there's another in Malaysia, the Malaysia anti corruption commission, even Myanmar, the Philippines, on top of other government units has the presidential anti corruption commission. Singapore has the corrupt practices Investigation Bureau, Thailand has the national counter corruption commission and even Vietnam. The steering committee for anti corruption I tried to cercla but I couldn't find any similar institutions. Now, similar to the Philippines, I think this is a fitting man of metaphor at the time when we're dealing with with the covid 19 pandemic. Chronic this corruption is a chronic disease with deep roots. For example, One study showed that as far back as the early 2000s, three of the countries in Southeast Asia The Philippines being one of them. So the others being Indonesia and Thailand, ranked among the most corrupt countries in the world based on several indices. And this had at the time this had been going on for the last three or four decades. So I thought that was, I thought that was That's very interesting. And even when we look at the, I mean, what was taking place during the period 80s and 90s, when the democracies were supposedly robust, in the region. There were an you know, there were expectations that, given the given the state of democracy at the time, there should have been a significant drop in corruption. But what they found out was contrary to what was the what was expected. One study noted, for example, that notwithstanding the economic liberalization that was experienced many years back, like in terms of the reduction of trade and investment barriers, the reduced government intervention in the economy, there were expectations of reduced corruption, because then businesses no longer needed to pay bribes to be allowed to operate. Yet despite this, there has been no there was at the time, there was no discernible fall in in corruption. So really, corruption in Southeast Asia has been going on for for decades. Now, more recently, going by one of the one of the studies that

came out, this is a survey, according to the UNDP, three out of four millennials in Asia, including our region, of course, believe corruption and poor governance are holding their countries back from social, political and economic progress, meaning corruption has its adverse impacts. As we all know, within our region, about eight in 10 of business leaders recognize corruption as a major challenge for their business operations. Now, this particular finding takes on greater significance. At this time, for example, when the when, you know there's massive unemployment because business companies have shut down and you know, if there's corruption and they're not able to operate as they should, then it also impacts their ability to hire more people. So it's really like a domino effect. Now in terms of public procurement in Southeast Asia, similar to what I found out when I did a non another series of studies looking at into the state of procurement at the at the local government unit level, Southeast Asia is one of the worst performers when it comes to publishing relevant public procurement documents in terms of procurement plans, tender documents award notice on government websites in the Philippines, we have a law on procurement that mandates government agencies to practice transparency like in the conduct of bids, for example, but still, procurement is a major problem. As I mentioned earlier, the procurement of medical supplies amid the pandemic is a major scandal now in the Philippines there. The Senate, for example, has just concluded its investigation. And it's I think it's it has already released a report. And and the public has been enraged, you know, by this kind of situation, because our health workers, for example, have been clamoring for increased salaries for the release of their promise benefits that to this day has not been given. So. So really, this is the extent of corruption we're seeing in specific parts of, of our region. Now in terms of the Freedom of Information laws, how many countries in Asia in Southeast Asia have the FBI law? I know that Thailand has the Philippines still has none. Even a for three decades, the FBI bill has been pending in Congress and it is very valuable because it allows the media for example, to access important documents. So these are some indications of corruption in the region. Now, if we would recall, some of the biggest corruption scandals that have that have rocked our region in Malaysia. Prior to the IMDb fiasco, there was the Parkland scandal, for example, in Indonesia, on the electronic ID system, the ek PP scheme, we remember this story by Cambodia daily, which was shut down I think, in 2018, still taking a course involving them in the military. Now in the Philippines. During the administration of President Joseph Estrada, there were one of the scandals that he his administration. was you know the, the string of expensive or mansions that we had for his Mr says that PCI j exposed through a series of reports and that help lead to the the fall of, of President Estrada. Now it's not surprising to see these kind of numbers by the Transparency International the corruption perception index in Southeast Asia for 2020, which was released earlier this year. of the 10 countries in the ASEAN Regional bloc, only Singapore is listed among the clean countries with 85 out of an index score of 100. Malaysia is performing relatively better, but all the rest be more or less there all the way down to Cambodia, which is the most which is the highest corruption. I mean, the the poorest ranking everybody else except for Singapore is performing very poorly in terms of perceptions of the incidence of corruption in this specific parts of the region. Now, if we look at the the, the the state of democracy in different parts of the region, based on the Freedom House report, its latest 2021 shows that only four countries are partly free, only one is free, more or less there. And the rest are not free, namely Brunei, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand, in Vietnam. Now, what does this say in terms of, you know, how, I mean, in terms of the state of governance in the region? Now, it's, I, it would be interesting to see the correlation, of course, between the state of democracy and the extent of corruption, whether it's correlation or causation, for example, in, in, in the Southeast Asian region, but

it's it's hard to tackle corruption without looking at the state at the same time at the state of governance, and the state of democracy or what's left of it in, in our region. It's very interesting, for example, that my own country, the Philippines, had the people power revolution that toppled democracy. And that raised a lot of expectations in terms of better governance, cleaner government, for example. But where are we today? You know, we're still one of the most corrupt countries not just in Asia, but in the world. So I think this the same can be said of other parts of the region, including, including Indonesia. Now, if you talk about turning the tide of corruption in the region, of course, there have been efforts to curb corruption, particularly by civil society, laws have been passed to address corruption. But of course, well, Assam's you know, as we would sometimes say, these are more honored in the bridge rather than in the in the observance. So the the widespread corruption in the region does not mean that there are no systems in place to to curb corruption. But how are they being implemented, for example, it's interesting that one author writing for the UNDP side said, standalone solutions do not work. We need to effectively address the multifaceted nature of corruption through systemic solutions. That involves multiple actors. And this brings me back to as i what i was pointing out earlier, working as an investigative journalist and being conscious of the extent of corruption in the Philippines, I was mindful of not just exposing the corrupt officials, but also helping the public to understand where the flaws were, why corruption is, you know, is taking place in the first place, and why there's been a lot of difficulty in trying to stop corruption in my country. And this brings me to, I'd like to share a bit about the the value of investigative journalism, maybe straight enough standalone solutions, according to this author, for example, would not be enough. But how about one investigative story at the time. It's interesting to know that our stories, especially in depth, investigative type, help raise the level of discourse understanding among the public in terms of The incidence of corruption. Why is there so much corruption in the procurement system, for example, in the you know, in how environmental regulations are being implemented, the public needs to understand this. And I'm I'm a firm believer in the role of a journalist in elevating the level of discourse around such important issues. Well, but we're well aware that in the past several years, the state of repression in Southeast Asia has been intensifying. And we're seeing that, even in the midst of the pandemic, as has often been said, been written about, the pandemic has been used as a pretext to clamp down on civil liberties on fundamental rights. And this includes, you know, press freedom, the ability of the media to expose, and really generate thorough understanding of what's going on and hold our public officials to account. But interestingly enough, the more repressive our environment is, the more there's a need for these kinds of issues to be brought to the fore to be to be to be explained in a way that the public will understand. Of course, there are challenges, especially these days in doing, you know, in, in bringing to light the specific incidents of corruption in our respective countries. You know, there have been, there have been severe consequences for journalists looking into specific issues such as the story for example, which shows we remember the to Myanmar journalists from Reuters. We know of course, what happened to Maria Reza, whose news publication the online news site rappler has exposed a number of situations relating to governance in the Philippines, in particular, the so called drug war of precedent, the theater, resulting in her being charged, for example, with being slapped with not just one, but several libel cases. This is part of a series on impunity in the Philippines in relation to the drug campaign of the anti drug campaign of the therapist. Some people need killing people dying left and right in the course of the so called war on drugs. So there are really, you know, severe consequences. But the more the government, I would say, as a former investigative journalist, and now some journalists, of course, the more crackdown, the

more intensifying the crackdown is, I think the more people need to understand what's going on. Even during the pandemic, we're seeing a sharp decline in fundamental freedoms, including press freedom. You know, there are many important issues that need to be brought to light. But journalists are being hampered from from from doing that. But it's interesting to know that in Southeast Asia, we have a strong investigative reporting tradition, at least in some parts. We've seen the setting up of invest of investigative journalism centers, Indonesia has, for example has the has jarring, Myanmar. I don't know if this is, if this is still operational. I checked their Facebook page, the last post was in 2019. But the Philippine center, but pcia, still very active. There's the Thailand Information Center for civil rights and investigative journalism and other media outreach in our region really doing commendable work in terms of exposing corruption. There's frontier, Myanmar, new narrative MalaysiaKini, of course, the independent outlet, the alternative outlet project, I of course, rappler, that they found Cambodia, the daily to name a few. I think this, this reflects on the the courage of journalists in the region to really not just do the usual reporting, but really produce more in depth investigative pieces for the public to be aware of what's going on. Very quickly, not all reporting is investigative reporting, of course, summers, some is merely merely reactive, I think when it comes to corruption is very important that there are more efforts being exerted toward investigative reporting, to bring what is otherwise hidden from public view to life. And this brings me to one thing that I want to highlight because of the repressive environment in which many journalists in the region are operating that makes it difficult for them to put out very important reports. I think this is time this it's high time that we had more collaborative effort, specially along the Lots of investigative journalism. In Indonesia, there's been considerable efforts, particularly by tampo, for example, even Thailand, there's been a push by some investigative journalists forward, cross border collaboration. Pandora paper which exposed our own leaders in the region, including those the very influential ones within the region, you know, in terms of their investments or Financial Holdings outside of their respective countries is an example of collaborative effort. Now, I want to highlight that the when it comes to exposing corruption and getting the under the public to understand the how corruption is taking place, why it matters to them, why solving it may not immediately bring food to their table. I think it's the role of investigative journalism is not just in terms of raising awareness, getting people to be informed, but it's really to engage people in the business of public governance, and where needed to enrage people because this corruption in the region is not something to take lightly or to take sitting down. This very interesting statement by Sheila Coronel one of the founders of PC AJ and who is now with, with Columbia University School of Journalism. This is a lot this holds a lot of relevance for our work as journalists, and in particular, for Investigative Journalists. Democracy is not a spectator sport. It requires the active participation of citizens in the business of governance by informing educating and mobilizing the public. And I think stories that expose corruption that explain to the public how corruption takes place, corruption takes place achieves this, it informs them, it educates them, and it mobilizes people to to action. So um, so overall, I would say that corruption is us as much as it's a big challenge for us. It also presents opportunities, especially for more collaborative efforts in the area of investigative journalism. It's something that we need to be taking a closer look at, in terms of what kinds of stories can we put out and the public needs to understand, especially at a time when, when we're bombarded with a lot of misinformation. And I end on that note, thank you very much. I wonder if there's any RV? I'm just looking at whether there's any question or the action, some images for participants, to our speakers.

**Muhammad Adib Faiz** 38:05

So test, there are two questions in the chat. Perhaps you could address those two, and then we'll move on to the rest of the session.

**Tess Bacalla** 38:14

Okay, I'm looking at Would you mind just reading them out? Sorry, . Sure,

**Muhammad Adib Faiz** 38:20

no problem. So the first question, you talked about elevating the level of discourse on corruption. As a journalist, is it important to avoid sensationalism in the discourse on corruption?

**Tess Bacalla** 38:34

Okay, this is where the value of IJ or investigative journalism comes in, because you cannot resort to some sensationalism when you do you follow the paper trail, the people trail you do fieldwork and observation, there's no way you can sensationalize because everything is backed up by data and facts. In my case, when I did the number of reports I did for I wrote for PCI J. I spent a lot of time obtaining documents because I could not rely on mere, the mere say so of my sources, even if I found them credible. There's no way you can sensationalize when you do you do adequate paper trail, I mean getting as much documents as you need to be able to verify what is otherwise is just allegation for example. And this is also where we earn more credibility from the public. Because when the public sees that what we claim in our stories is backed up by data backed up by investigation, but by documents that is that otherwise are available to them, then we you know the public would be able to see that you know, these are not just allegations they are these are not just claims but really verifiable information in terms of what this public official for example, or this public Institute is doing like in terms of the allocation have public funds, for example? Yeah, I hope I addressed that.

**Muhammad Adib Faiz** 40:04

Sure. In the next, the next question, what do you feel is the greatest challenge for Southeast Asian journalists in covering corruption? Do journalists and other countries experienced the same issues? And I guess what's meant here is basically, what are the unique challenges in Southeast Asia that you won't find, let's say, covering corruption in a western country.

**Tess Bacalla** 40:27

Um, well, in terms of the extent of repression are, the challenges are greater relative to other countries that don't experience the same level of repression. For example, when when, with the simple act of trying to obtain documents, your encounter restrictions from the government, it makes it more difficult for you to do your investigative report because otherwise, you know, without those supporting documents, there's no way you can come up with really a credible, a credible report. other challenges would be resources, it takes resources to do investigative work. If news outputs are not willing to invest in investigative reports, there's no way you can come up with one and at this time, especially during this time of pandemic, news organizations are eating shut are either shutting down, or have significantly cut back on their operations, which affects the volume of stories that they're able to put out. So those are two challenges that I'm seeing, um, and, of course, the political will of organizations of media

organizations in the Philippines, not just rappler. But even some of the biggest newspaper, Philippine Daily Inquirer have received direct threats from President Duterte. And this, you know, and this intimidates them in coming up with with scathing reports on what's really going on. So I would, I wouldn't say that the challenges are unique to Southeast Asia, but they're more pronounced in our region than elsewhere.

**Muhammad Adib Faiz** 42:08

We have a another question coming in. Just one more. Are there any ASEAN media support organizations, that journalists can be a part of, to collaborate on cross border stories?

**Tess Bacalla** 42:26

Again, on the top of my head, I can't think of any at this moment. But I would say that the opportunities are there for us to come together. Even if we don't have an argument. We're not organized as groups. Because for example, and we're trying we're hoping to do that at Asia, democracy Chronicles on similar themes. For example, somebody in India doing a story on press freedom, and other in, for example, in, in, in Malaysia, for instance, and then you bring the stories together. I mean, that can be as simple as that. And you have a cross border started mainly to provide a broader picture of what's going on and to prove to show to the public that this situation is now original in scope. And this is not just country specific. So at individual levels, I think journalists can come together agree on doing stories. But I think some organizations are more open to being tapped for potential collaborative pieces, because issues now are cross border. And it doesn't make sense to just confine our stories to our geographical borders, because and I think it makes it, there's a practical side to it. Also, what you cannot publish in your country, you can get it published elsewhere. And, you know, because then you don't need you don't have to fear being charged or slapped with cyber libel, for instance. So I mean, those are some practical, practical things that could be considered at the very least. Yeah, I'm very, I'm quite optimistic about the prospects for collaboration, because I see that there are more and more efforts in that regard. And journalists, including, as part of my experience, as editor in chief of Asia, democracy Chronicles are now more open to collaboration. Yeah.

**Muhammad Adib Faiz** 44:22

We have another question that's come in, but I think we're almost out of time Tess. Did you want to address one more question, or would you like to move on to Dr. Torplus's presentation?

**Tess Bacalla** 44:34

To be fair, the doctor needs maybe we could reserve this for later that. We have our panel discussion later. So should I proceed and introduce Dr. Nick?

**Muhammad Adib Faiz** 44:45

Absolutely. So So now,

**Tess Bacalla** 44:47

thanks for the questions. So may I introduce our first speaker Dr. Torplus Nick Yomnak. He's assistant professor at the Faculty of Economics in Chulalongkorn University and Director of the Center of political

economic studies. He is also co founder and chief advisor, hand all caps, social enterprise executive board member, anti corruption organization. This very quickly on Dr. Nick. He, he co founded CM lab to study corruption from multi disciplinary approaches, which is very relevant. I think what he's going to discuss with us today. Meaning economics, legal political science, education, etc. findings from the research are then implemented by hand. Maybe you can tell us more about Pat what it does. So Dr. Nick will provide us an academic class, I think that the issue of corruption and I'm personally looking forward to hearing what he has to share. So Dr.Nick.

**Dr Torplus Nick Yomnak 45:58**

Hi, good afternoon, everyone. Thank you very much Tess for just such a kind introduction. And thank you for the such an insight insightful presentations, I'll be touching on several points that you made earlier, for example, corruption will kill men, why data is not well disclosed. That happens in Thailand as well, despite the fact that you mentioned that we have the FOI law. Somehow it was it's not quite well enforced. The impact of corruption is devastated. And which showed showed in the fact that our ctio corruption perception index is so high if we don't consider that Singapore formula here. But so that's basically what we'll be discussing today. But I need to disclose this first that I am I'm sure that the least or at least at least less experienced than most of the people in this in this room regarding journalism. And so I want to be able to address the fact that the process of how we can get information on how to write a news article wells, but, but I'm sure that a few few of the questions that we have been facing, which is is this corruption? How do we define corruption? Is this good? Is this policy, anti corruption measure good policy that we should praise? Do we should support? Or is this something that we should argue against? Or watch? What How should we address these things? When when we hear it now? How should we write it in the news? So that is kind of like what I will be presenting today within this 30 minute presentation. So please allow me to share the screen. Okay, click present. All right. Can you see my screen? All right. Okay, thank you very much. So again, thank you for the kind introduction. That is, this is me. And the problem and the first thing that I would like to mention is that I just mentioned earlier, we have been facing these problems a lot this questions a lot. And and the answer is that there is no definite definition for corruption. From the views viewpoint of political science, they talk about the use of public power of private gain. from the viewpoint of economics, they say that this is some question of formal rules governing the allocation of public resources. So so that's the main point the allocation of resources. So it means that when it derived into the activities that you have observed, to write to news or from you receive from your witness, it could range from just direct bribery, to extortion to fraud to speed money into embezzlement. So this is to show that there is no definite answer. It can corruption can be very narrow, it can be paying money to the police officers, I can be both very broad, appointing your own children into public office as your secretary or something like that. So it's, it's it can be debatable, but when you want to address this as a corruption issue, these issues can be addressed and be defined as an under big umbrella of the definition of corruption. So don't worry too much about the definition. We're academics still argue hard on this issue. But I would like to take you back a little bit. To see how we approach we say academic approach, the issue of corruption since Well, not the beginning, per se, but but like, from 30/40 years ago. So when we first talked Talk about corruption. That is around 1960 1970s. At that time, people were the because before that people academic we're still debating whether corruption greases the wheel making, like speed money making things go faster, or does it sends the wheel making things go slower. And at the end of the era, the

academy kind of agrees there's a consensus that corruption, greed at science the wheel, rather than greases, the wheel, making red tape, more strict making bureaucrats and politicians be able to ask for more or get more money from from the citizens. So in the year around, once, this was a consensus around 1970s, academic view corruption academic and the public. And of course, the media as well, view corruption is associated with power. So many states and government use political science approach to decide the anti corruption policies. And by that it means when we use the approach of political science, we look at corruption as as caused by the power imbalance. So power imbalance by state of society, lack of efficient check and balance system as a consequence, they can take advantage of the society. So what is the solution for that? a stable and good quality remote democracy is the key of people to be the hands of the people creating power balance and good governance with efficient check and balance system. So it's like that straightforward. What's the problem? Some countries, has been able to successfully curb corruption using democracy. But somehow in many countries, for example, in Thailand as well, we have had democracy for the last 80 or 90 years. But somehow we still facing high level of corruption, as Tess has shown earlier, and I'm sure this happened with many countries as well. So the question of how whether corruption, whether democracy to corruption has been debatable in academic as well. But this has been kind of solved and announced by the Transparency International with who developed the corruption perception index, they recently included a variety of democracy project into the calculation of corruption perception index very recently. So it shows that yes, democracy is very important. But this is a very well, not quite, not not quite the latest but but very interesting findings from the fundata. In 220 11, it shows that, well, maybe it's yes and no, theoretically, really, there is no relationship between corruption democracy show up, show an upside down u curve, meaning that at the earlier stage of democracy, corruption, it can provoke and allow corruption to, to increase, and then once we reach the threshold, corruption can be decreased with democracy and by default by having more higher democracy. So why it's such a crazy idea how democracy which is supposed to be the ultimate solution to fight corruption can promote corruption in a certain period of time. So in in this, in this particular paper, he suggested that, because at the earliest stage of corruption, check and balance system has just been established, for example, these anti corruption agencies, which Tess has, again, kindly shown us had just been established. So power from one people has now spread to the parents of many, but not as many in the earliest stage, not in the hands of the people, but on the hands of a few bureaucrats on the hand of your politicians with weak check and balance system. So it kind of like be able to increase the level of corruption. And once this institution is strengthened, once the power is allocated to the hand of the people, then that's the threshold that we are looking for, and fast allowing corruption to reduce when we have such a strong demand, so strong, stable and good quality democracy. So so to suggest just to talk about this, just to say that, yes, democracy is the solution. But democracy is such a complex system. It's not just having an election, it's it needs to be a free and fair election, as well as freedom of speech, free, press freedom, so on and so forth. So when we approach corruption, and when we approached the topic of democracy, be aware of this as well. That that it's something To, to kind of think about UN and the UN many what after this, most of the people asked me, then what is the threshold? And that is the weak, weak point of this paper, which cannot suggest where the threshold can really be should be. Is the timeline is is 100 years old? What did it What is it? So basically, it's just a theoretical relationship between corruption to democracy to to well to kind of address this issue theoretically. But in practice, yes, of course, as I mentioned earlier, many democratic states somehow and successful in curbing

corruption, maybe because of that upside, upside down u curve. So around 1990s, once we realized that this is a problem, we kind of like, turn away a little bit and look at the problem on the legal aspects. Look at the pestle problem with the rule of law, that there is no equality before the law, there's no equal justice and requires equal protection, ensuring that no individuals or groups or individuals can be privileged over the other by the law. So yeah, again, legal approach to design and enforce law as the main anti corruption policy. So when we took legal approach, we said, we see that corruption is caused by the inefficiency of law enforcement. And so the solution is to is to establish the rule of law meaning clarity, more clarity, more clear, and more efficient and effective enforcement of the law, and of course, higher participation from the people in designing the law. Once we start believing that the law is the solution, Thailand is one of the very good example. Tell us one example. This. So from the 1990s, to today, we have a question or something, or should I continue?

**Tess Bacalla 57:10**

No, sorry. please mute your mics, please.

**Dr Torplus Nick Yomnak 57:14**

Oh, this happened to me many times, don't worry. Okay. So once we took this approach, we were able, we were able to have 15, anti corruption laws, and it is increasing. And this is a very high number. Thinking about this. This is just one single social problem. And each law, thinking about each law is like this thick, and we have like 15 laws and regulations on fighting corruption alone. And again, one more thing that prove that this might not be the only solution is that if you have heard about this, this policies or this project before, it's called regulatory, you've seen, it found that the more laws and regulations we have, the less efficiency we have in our society. The more licenses we have, for example, in Thailand, if you want to establish or register a new factory, you have to go through like 10s bureaucratic agencies, and you need to secure like 15 licenses, something like that. So having more law, having an higher number of law doesn't solve the problem quite efficiently and effectively. And on the contrary, reducing the number of laws and regulations has been proven more effective and more efficient in reducing corruption. For example, in this case, Korea as us have over 8000 laws relating to relicensing. So after regulatory your team may need reducing. Through these process, collection, review, stakeholder engagement and analysis, public hearing, they were able to reduce 48% of these licenses and saving over 4.4% of their GDP sorry that somehow it missed there. And Vietnam as well. For example, Vietnam has 12,000 similar laws and revoke. And if we were to revoke over 70% of them would facilitate over a million job creation. And many countries in Southeast Asia in ASEAN has been able to adopt this project to a certain extent Thailand has adopt this project in a few years ago, somehow, but somehow, it ended up with a very big report. The government hasn't been trying to actually enforce or reduce the the number of these laws. So so just to again, to wrap up on this approach is that well, looking at through looking at the corruption problem through legal lens legal approach is one solution. But we cannot solve that by having too many laws and increasing the number of laws every year to solve one single problem. So, if this the problem, we we democracy is right is the way but what we there's so many things in democracy is such a such a complex we need manufacturer manufacturers in establishing stable and good quality democracy increasing number of law may not be the solution. So, what is the solution around year 2000? We were having we SF academic we were having this question. So, how to approach this social science then come into came into play, they were proposed that SL as

an alternative solution. Well, social science similar to journalism to a certain extent, find that well corruption is caused by personal relationship, for example, causing fake favoritism leading to special and unfair treatment which facilitate bribery, so and so forth. So the solution there's no specific explicit solution, but rather often more better understanding of the people and the phenomenon and this is where it benefit the journalism directly. This is from one of the research that I conducted last year with social scientists and a professor at the marketing department, we would like to know that we have spent 10s of 1000s if not hundreds of million baht in campaigning people to fight corruption and one when we when they asked the national anti corruption commission Who are your target group, they say that everyone in the country is that target group and this confused people in marketing so much because if you say that everyone is your target group, that it means that you must have a billion but a million US dollars in for for a budget for the campaign right? Because you cannot sell everything to everyone at at one time. So, we conducted this research to really to understand people and how they perceive corruption and corruption anti corruption effort differently, we will be we were able to separate people into four groups one on the first group here or the other group that sorry about the tie and then add in. So the first group or the frontline here the group that they are very actively involved with anti corruption efforts already and are the fourth group here stay individualist meaning that they are not, they do not care much about corruption. And we try to understand their behavior, their What do they like, what don't they like, what, what kind of message Do they like. And we found that, if we were to these two groups may not be our target groups, one of them are our loyal customers already. And one of them will need lots of investment in order to pull them into the anti corruption work with so these two, then group two and group three who are in the middle, they might just need a little nudge in order to bring them on into the anti corruption project anti corruption effort. So once we found the who our target groups were, we try to see how communication would affect people behavior differently. So we used a kind of behavioral economics experiment, social experiment to test on on 100,000 people in Thai in Thailand. And we found that the message with which has high creativity less aggressive explain with kind of like emotion, letting them see the impact of corruption and use less number will be able to pull people, especially these crew groups into joining our anti corruption efforts better than using a more aggressive and use higher number. So so that's from from our experiment. Another point is we conducted another experiment using a game called corrupt the game which was developed by one of our wildcard colleagues, we found that different types of corruption can be solved differently and also with difficult, different difficulty levels. So the methodology is very lengthy, so I won't go too much into that. But we found that people think tend to think that bribery is more obvious than helping your friends illegally, then providing funds to your some budget. procurement matters to your friend. So if we were to approach this and create success, sorry, let's fight bribery first, and then we'll be a when we have success story, we will be able to tell this story and give hope to the people and then they'll follow up with with the following more difficult corruption to problem types, for example. Also, I thought that this would be quite interesting for you. under the umbrella social science, there's this approach called linguistics. So I work with a professor from the Department of linguistics. And he suggested that well, language can make people feel differently about corruption as well. So choosing words correctly can help achieving the goal. In one, our first experiment, we separate out our people into two, two control group, one of the group you see here on the left hand side we give them a piece of paper suggesting message success and that corruption is like devil and the rest is like corruption is how so high impact is so high, it's so and so forth. And then the other group in the other room, we gave gave them the similar

message, but the different is we say that corruption is like disease, and we should do this corruption is so high and so on and so forth. Okay. And then we asked them, How would they suggest to fight corruption 80% of people who receive the message this corruption is like devils suggested that we should increase punishment, we should kill, more execute corrupt culprits, while 80% in this group, who received the word that corruption is like disease suggested that we should have better monitoring system we should have checked the higher better check and balance system. So this happened within 30 seconds with just one different word. What will happen to us who have read newspapers, online news, for like 3040 years? How if we how, how different wording in different newspaper in different countries affect our behavior. So the second research based on this finding, we went to Indonesia, a couple of years ago, met several people at the check the top posts, and we look at the wordings of comparing over 300 million words from the two newspaper in two countries, we use English because it's easier to do the word mining process. But what we found is that in Bangkok post in Thailand, we use words that cause drama, meaning that causing people to be very emotional using death, you know, take away things while in the in the Czech topos. Most of the words when we talk when they talk about corruption, they talk about laws and regulation, collaboration, participation system, media news, and it allows this to happen, if you I'm sure, that you use from from Indonesia can tell me better about this incident that people gather when the KPK budget was cut, and people gather to kind of like protest against the government cutting the budget of the KPK which is the anti corruption agencies. This has never happened in Thailand. And Indonesia has like 100 anti corruption groups and society groups, civil societies organizations for more in both informal and formal. In Thailand we have 20 to 30 organizations so so we try to somehow related to these two together to find out that wordings in newspapers in articles can affect the behavior and how people react to corruption. Furthermore, we were so interested in how media use words in when we complain the way they compare with corruption. So we would like to know what people you would behave when we compare corruption to a different circumstance. On the left hand side, again, this is like the first experiment we separate people into two groups, one groups we gave them message suggesting that corruption is like fire, your house is on fire. And the second group we gave a message suggesting that corruption is like you piloting a ship through storms, and your ship is about to be to sank to sink. Sorry. So what do you think who should be responsible for each case? Apparently, again, 80% answered differently. 80% in this group suggested that everyone should be able to help in the way we'd say that corruption is like fire Your house is on fire because it, it kind of gives you the impression that we everyone can help we can have a bucket of water and read throw the water into the fire and it helps. But on the right hand side, when we say that we it's like a ship going through storms, people tend to suggest that the person who should be responsible is the leader in that country, because you kind of like give the responsibility to the pilot of the ship, the captain, the ship captain, so and you kind of like have to sit and pray in hoping that they will be able to take you through the storms. So so just small words like this, change people behavior and change how people think. Okay, I started with suggesting that I'm an economist, I have like five minutes left, though I'll go through this very quickly. So where whereas the we have the economics, economics being, we have always been there. But we don't like to talk about corruption that much, perhaps because it's not too difficult than say a problem to approach we'd rather talk about how to make money. But there are people who talk about production as well. For example, the neoclassical economics, which we considered as a mainstream economics thing that corruption is occurs when benefits outweigh costs. So the solution is to increase punishment and detection. So based on this

idea, it is to use the rational choice theory. And for example, if you think about whether people will, will rob a bank, they will think, yes, I would do it if the money can be higher than the cost, and the cost can then imagine ammunition and, and criminal, plus criminal charges, or the breaks another word likelihood to gain money is more than the likelihood to be caught. So based on this rational choice theory, Professor Robert C. Ellickson created this corruption formula, he suggested that this creation plus monopoly minus accountability, equals to corruption. So basically, if we were to reduce corruption, we should reduce discretion, because politicians and bureaucrats for can use their power to do anything, we need to reduce that monopoly, we don't want someone to take control of the power need to increase accountability, which include include transparency, accountability, data, openness, as test again, has already suggest that you have covered almost everything test, thank you for that. So I don't have to go through too much. There are other types Carter kinds of economics either schools of thought as well, for example, the political economics, as you see him, Karl Marx here suggests that it's an exploitation, one class exploit the capital, this exploit the labor from the labor class. So what we can what can be so the solution is a people movement and civil society. And this, as I mentioned earlier, this is 50 of pictures from what happened, what happened in Thailand, which is very little compared to other countries, for example, in Indonesia, you should be very proud of yourself. We we, we have, we have so much lower number of anti corruption organization in our country. But we have tried, we've been trying to create more collaboration among people. And these are, for example, some of the organizations we have some news. For example, here is the right Institute, which is one of the biggest investigative journalism in Thailand, we try to support them with mass chair and watchdog group, which is a social social media online grew and they work together very well. So this is one of the model that we have, that's a yam that enhance social enterprise help creative collaboration amongst informal and formal news institution and to to cross the border into the, this is two, this is the prevention group, for example, the integrity part of working on creating higher transparency in procurement. And this is the cultivation so curriculum for students and young children to teach them about the negative effects of corruption. So when they work together, or the investigative journalism will have more things to write about and have they have been able to successfully do that in the past years. Also, one minute left, two minutes Thank you. Are there also other approach for example, institution economics, we explained that corruption is caused by a symmetric information, meaning that some The bureaucrats or the politicians have more information than the people are more than the, the more than the media. So bettering monitoring system reduce transaction costs, that helps. And this is where the media comes into play, because the media to be able to be able to reduce this symmetric information problem. Also, at the same time, institutional economics leads to the establishment of these agencies, the KPK, the CPA, be the Malaysian anti corruption commission and a Thailand corruption commission. I would like to end this presentation here with this case studies, which was very recent in Thailand, if you see this, this is a light, light pole, very beautiful, but it's been put installed into a Nowhere Land. No one passes through this, this single pole oppose cost around how much 2000 pounds 1000 to 3000 US dollars. So that's something like that. One, one citizens found this. If we don't have any data available public data available, or as test put it, as procurement data available, we wouldn't be able to do it. And that has been lacking in Thailand. We don't know how much this cost. We don't know who is the response for this. They're responsible for this. And why are they there? So So yeah, I'm left and at the July University enhance social enterprise with the anti corruption, anti corruption organization, Thailand has been able to develop this. Very, we're proud to present this. This is called an AI. So we spend years gathering 20

million data set from the procurement from the government procurement platform, and put into this Google like, web page called AI Atlas, anti corruption, Thailand and AI is like artificial intelligence using artificial intelligence to get all the information and analyze information. And you found this. And we, these are the companies who bid for this project, how much they bid for it. And if you can see this is very This is that the name is not disclosed. Yeah. But if you can see this, this is from the real case, it's very astonishing. So this, this is the reference price. This is how, how much below the reference price, the actual price is. And you can see this, there are five companies bidding for the same project, all the four companies bid the same price, one company bid, just 1000, but less than the other four. And so this CCC company won the bid, is this very clear that it has very high risk for collusion and high risk for corruption in this case. So I said our news agencies, and all social media agencies use this case. And we were able to stop this project and put people behind this project behind bars. So this is one such success stories from having less symmetric information from the collaboration of data with the civil society and with the investigative journalism. So So based on these theories, based on these so sorry, so based on these academic theories on how do I stop share, so sorry about based on this theory, we were able to establish new projects, we're able to understand corruption differently, we were able to provide suggestions to the media to the to the state national anti corruption commission to the civil society groups who work on this particular problem. And when we work together, using knowledge and research from the academic side, we've worked together to create new possibilities to fight corruption together. So I in my presentation here, thank you very much.

**Tess Bacalla 1:19:26**

Thank you, Dr. Nick. That's very interesting. That's a lot to digest, but very interesting. I'm sure they have their very practical value to us in the media in terms of how we do our work and you know, as we look into corruption are very quickly there's a question here before we go for a break in Malaysia, in Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines, it was hoped that removing corrupt leaders would eliminate corruption, thus getting rid of corrupt leader reduce corruption or are social factors more important?

**Dr Torplus Nick Yomnak 1:19:59**

I think did help. Obviously, if there's some, as I mentioned earlier in their corruption formula, we have monopoly high in monopoly, in this case, corrupt leaders, there's more higher likelihood that there will be more corruption, the product, but the problem doesn't stop there. If even we remove the corrupt leaders, but the system the check and balance system, as I mentioned earlier that, for example, democracy is not that simple. It requires second balance system, it requires power to really be on the hand of the people. If we don't have a system in place, it will be likely that there will be new corrupt leaders bureaucrat to be able or bureaucrats and politicians will be you be able to use their discretion to create more corruption. So we need to reduce both of them. And at the end, and at the same time, increase accountability. Sounds simple, right? It's not like, No, no, I say that. It sounds simple, but it has complete high complexity behind each of the factors. Yeah.

**Tess Bacalla 1:21:07**

In many instances, it's just the players that change.

**Dr Torplus Nick Yomnak 1:21:10**

Yes, yes, obviously. Yeah.

**Tess Bacalla** 1:21:12

Yeah. Okay. Do we have another Adib? You said to sorry, before we go for a break?

**Muhammad Adib Faiz** 1:21:20

Sure. There's one more, just give me one moment.

**Tess Bacalla** 1:21:23

Okay. You maybe maybe you can just read it out, please?

**Muhammad Adib Faiz** 1:21:27

Sure. Yeah, I can do that. So we have another question on the issue of linguistics. So your section on linguistics and discourse was very interesting. How to Southeast Asian languages, like Thai, for instance, how do they present ideas on corruption? And I guess a good question asked in connection to that is, this is Southeast Asia. What does Southeast Asian culture say about corruption as well?

**Dr Torplus Nick Yomnak** 1:21:53

Well, I believe that it has different kinds of how you the way you use and the words you use for for to to, to compare corruption affect our behavior as just like in the example I show, but unfortunately, we weren't able to use like linguistical computable linguistics code to come calculate words in other languages apart from English, because it's different languages, especially Thai and other languages in Southeast Asia, so highly complex. So that's why we use backup post and ceccato posts, but based on that rational, based on that rational that even link in English words can can affect our behavior. I'm sure that that words in other language food do have effect on our behavior as well. And, and comparing corruption with like, we we say, we eat something, we just we just eat something. It's it's it, it makes corruption less, less aggressive, less deficit, less of a devastating effect than using corruption as like, as I mentioned earlier, devil or disease, something like that.

**Tess Bacalla** 1:23:14

This is very interesting. We wish we could extend the discussion. There might be more questions, but we need to go for a break now. right at you. Yes, because we reduce it to five minutes or do we still make it? 10 minutes we can have

**Muhammad Adib Faiz** 1:23:26

10 so we can have 10 minutes? That's perfectly fine.

**Tess Bacalla** 1:23:29

Okay. Okay, so now it's 3:57 by my watch, so is that correct? Okay, let's take it for so we come back at 4:10 Thank you very much, Dr. Tor. We'll, we'll try and have more questions maybe later during the final discussion, but for now we'll have a 10 minute break. Please come back at 4:10

**Muhammad Adib Faiz** 1:23:52

Is that okay? Yes. So for 10 Malaysian time. Yes. And Philippines. Philippines.

**Tess Bacalla** 1:23:59

Okay, okay. Later, back, okay.

**Muhammad Adib Faiz** 1:24:02

Yes. Okay. Cynthia if you want to just screen share your slides now. Just I mean right now. Yeah we'll start in two minutes but I thought you might want to try sharing the screen now. Yeah, we'll just you can share it and then we'll just leave it on until until we stop sharing ended. You can screen share it and then once we start you can just you already have it prepared.

**Cynthia Gabriel** 1:34:58

Yeah. Okay. I'm going to do that now. Just in case something, something goes wrong. You see it has disappeared. But you

**Tessa Bacalla, PH Asia Dem Chronicles** 1:35:13

Cynthia? Sorry, is it Gabrielle Gabriel? Just making sure I pronounced her?

**Cynthia Gabriel** 1:35:20

It's certainly not here anymore. Sorry. No, no, I don't know where my PowerPoint disappeared.

**Muhammad Adib Faiz** 1:35:28

Do you want me to share the slides for you instead? I can do that.

**Cynthia Gabriel** 1:35:32

Hold on, hold on, hold on. Where did it go? It was here just a moment ago.

**Tess Bacalla** 1:35:36

I think that's the same thing that happened to me. Are you You're

**Cynthia Gabriel** 1:35:40

okay, I have one minute. I think we already starting.

**Muhammad Adib Faiz** 1:35:44

No, no, it's okay. You can you can take your time. You press share screen, the

**Cynthia Gabriel** 1:35:51

I pressed share screen, but now it's not anywhere there for me to share. All my other stuff. So it's,

**Muhammad Adib Faiz** 1:36:03

is it open? Are your slides open on your computer?

**Cynthia Gabriel** 1:36:06

Can I just share it from a minimized version of it?

**Muhammad Adib Faiz** 1:36:12

minimized version?

**Cynthia Gabriel** 1:36:14

Okay, let me just click this and see this come out.

**Tess Bacalla** 1:36:21

Maybe try and open it again. That's what happened.

**Cynthia Gabriel** 1:36:23

Can you see.

**Muhammad Adib Faiz** 1:36:27

No, no, we cant. The Do you? Do you have it open on your laptop?

**Cynthia Gabriel** 1:36:33

Yeah.

**Muhammad Adib Faiz** 1:36:34

So the first thing is to make sure that it's open on your laptop itself. And then what you do is you screen share after that

**Cynthia Gabriel** 1:36:43

disappeared? I can't believe it. Okay, let me try and open it again.

**Muhammad Adib Faiz** 1:37:03

Test I believe you're asked Cynthia question or?

**Tess Bacalla** 1:37:06

Yeah, just wanted to make sure I would pronounce her name. surname. Correct. Family and Gabrielle Gabriel.

**Cynthia Gabriel** 1:37:14

So I think it's okay. You can see. Yeah,

**Muhammad Adib Faiz** 1:37:21

yes, yes. Now we can

**Tess Bacalla** 1:37:22

create Okay, so now I'll introduce you. Okay. Yeah.

**Muhammad Adib Faiz** 1:37:31

Should I go back to the beginning?

**Cynthia Gabriel** 1:37:36

Clear?

**Muhammad Adib Faiz** 1:37:37

Yeah. Is this your face? You

**Cynthia Gabriel** 1:37:42

know, we'll get a message from you later.

**Tess Bacalla** 1:37:45

Okay. Yeah. Hi, everyone. Thank you for coming back. Yeah, so now we move to our next session. Now looking at corruption from another lens. We're looking at corruption based on issues of Alicia illicit financial flows, political financing, and how corruption fuels transnational and cross border crimes in Southeast Asia. So we're just privileged to have with us we Cynthia Gabriel advocate and solicitor UN ODC. UN Office on Drugs and Crime consultant and civil society leader on governance and anti corruption issues, as well as founding director of the Center to combat corruption and cronyism or C4 Cynthia is easily recognized as a key rights advocate in Malaysia. She has spent most of her professional life in the field of advancing and promoting human rights, good governance and democratic freedoms. She has also worked on un contractual research work in the area of migrant and refugee refugee research in their vulnerabilities towards HIV AIDS, much of her time has been devoted to building and shaping the work of leading human rights advancements in Malaysia and across the globe. In recognition of this, she was elected vice president of the global advocate advocacy group, the Paris based International Federation for human rights during the period 2004 to 2009. And as I mentioned, she was recently set as recently set up a Policy Center The called the sea for the center to combat corruption and cronyism. Over to you, Cynthia.

**Cynthia Gabriel** 1:39:28

Thank you very much, Tess. Thank you to kiniacademy for this invitation. And for this most interesting, masterclass session, which I believe is very timely also, what I wanted to do, also because we already listened to an expert journalist and an academic that presented very interesting discourses just now, I wanted to do several things. One is to map and identify corruption. in Southeast Asia, which means beyond our country bodies, but what is it that constitutes regional corruption or cross border corruption? And what is it that we need to be concerned about as investigative journalists, and as investigators in the fight against corruption in turning the tide against corruption. So we know that Southeast Asia is a very vulnerable region, very dynamic region. And it's one of the fastest growing economies in the world. But we also know that safeguards, institutional structures to look at better accountability and accountable governance is probably one of the weaker regions in the world. So we need to actually look at better investigations, paper trail, evidence base, and real investigative work. So I'm actually happy to present a couple of case studies, which I hope will be evidence for many investigative journalists among yourselves to, to start writing and perhaps probe deeper and dig deeper and to see

what kind of tools that we have available. So what I also like to do is to look at the cross linking factors between business and politics, cross linking factors between transnational crime, and how it interfaces with corruption, and whether corruption actually fuels and facilitates cross border crimes, cross border criminal activities, and crimes, which are transnational in nature. So this is just an overview of geography, and a location of Southeast Asia and where we are today, and all the different countries and some of the maritime bodies that also have many issues related to corruption. So in moving forward, I think a very important thing that we need to probably situate this discussion is to look at ASEAN itself. Now, if many of us have already been familiar with writing about ASEAN and knowing about it, its mode of operations, we could be critical about its lacks ways of moving forward, it's very cost cautious about not getting into each other's domestic politics. It's a very focused block on regional trade advancement. And sometimes other issues like human rights, security issues, and all that are many issues that become frustrating as we try to discuss. But having said all that, there's something very important also that we need to recognize that ASEAN has also evolved and grown and known that it has to come together, it has to have its act together if it points to be relevant trading bloc in the region. So there's an ASEAN charter now, and the three important, secure pillars. One of which that I want to highlight today is the political security blueprint. And the other one is the actual economic community, and then the ASEAN socio cultural pillar. And all these three are commitments of ASEAN to actually develop an ASEAN community vision for 2025. So we are in 2021. Now and it looks like the a few years before us to actually look at how to turn the tide on corruption in Southeast Asia. But as also digging through, I found something interesting at the ASEAN political security group blueprint which all of our governments had actually signed on. So if you look at a 2.3, there are several commitments that our action governments have made. One of it is to implement the memorandum of understanding that was signed back in 2004. And that is to prevent and combat corruption. To look at the Treaty on mutual legal assistance. This is really important in criminal matters. And corruption matters that involves more than one country and now we can actually share a lot from the lessons learned from the one MDP scandal. And we can promote ASEAN cooperation within the unpack the United Nations Convention against Corruption, which all 10 ASEAN member states have actually signed. So this is, these are actually tools for us to use in calling out our governments and actually ensuring that some commitments get realized or how we can actually push mobilized further intensify corruption, anti corruption efforts now as a region. And very interestingly, recently, there is a pact formed called the Southeast Asia parties against corruption in which ASEAN member states have actually permitted to develop a greater capacity building training for governments, law enforcement, etc. on how to fight corruption, promote the actual integrity, dialogue, and so on. I'm putting this because I think we also need to remind ourselves that there are documents like this in Southeast Asia, among ASEAN countries. And these are probably very important tools for us to move forward in how we want to develop better collaboration and investigative journalism. As we talk about corruption in Southeast Asia, and how we can hold our governments to account for all their actions at country level, and at the sub regional level of ICA. So here is what I was hoping to do is to introduce some cross border issues, which does not involve just one country. It involves definitely more than one country and sometimes many other countries in the ASEAN region. So the first picture on the left is probably something that most of our countries suffer from, which is an issue of natural resource governance, an issue of forest governance, and illegal logging that quite rapidly takes place. It definitely happens in Indonesia. It definitely happens in Malaysia, in the Philippines and many other countries because of rich tropical forests. The picture below is something

that is hotting up now. We are completely overwhelmed, completely inspired by the collaboration and investigative exposition of the Panama Papers. First step was a couple of years ago, and very recently, just a couple of weeks ago, Pandora papers, which highlights so many Southeast Asian countries, apart from countries in the world on illicit financial flows, are tax evasion, on how the yubel rich actually evade paying taxes at home, but enrich their wealth through the shadow economy in offshore islands using unscrupulous means like shell companies and various other issues that Pandora papers that actually helped us digest a bit better, and help us realize how it has actually impacted so many of our countries in Southeast Asia. And then of course, the picture on the right is something that we see all the time. It's it's a ships of stateless people, refugees trying to seek refuge in some of our shores. And many Rohingya communities have actually died as a result of all these. Now, these are cross country issues, cross border issues, and there are many, many more. But what I wanted to highlight as some of these details and case studies that will actually make very important investigative writing, and it's really all about data all about trying to digest how much we can analyze around what it needs to do. Okay. Hello.

**Muhammad Adib Faiz 1:48:53**

Yeah, we're all here, Cynthia?

**Cynthia Gabriel 1:48:56**

Yeah, I didn't know what happened was like just got jammed.

**Muhammad Adib Faiz 1:49:16**

Would you like me to switch over to my slides?

**Cynthia Gabriel 1:49:19**

Yeah, please, because I'm not sure what happened. It just suddenly got stuck. Should I stop sharing?

**Muhammad Adib Faiz 1:49:36**

No, I'm already I'm Can everyone see my screen? I'm sharing this this one and corruption in Southeast Asia. Okay, that image of the boat.

**Cynthia Gabriel 1:49:45**

Okay, so I just need to tell you to move to the next slide. Okay, can we move Sorry about that. Not sure what happened for the next one Slide.

**Muhammad Adib Faiz 1:50:27**

Oh, Cynthia, can you see the screen?

**Cynthia Gabriel 1:50:31**

Okay, can you see the screen? No.

**Muhammad Adib Faiz 1:50:34**

cross border corruption and ASEAN with that. Okay.

**Cynthia Gabriel** 1:50:37

Okay. Right, let me just continue. So this is what I was actually talking about some of the other examples of transnational crimes fueled by corruption. The one very important case study that I'd like to highlight is the import of plastic waste. I've stretched a little bit on illegal logging, illicit financial flows. And then we come to a couple more rather serious transnational crimes affecting the ASEAN region like drug trafficking, which is very rampant in Myanmar, and how it affects its neighboring countries, for example, Thailand and also Malaysia. illicit trade. This is actually very interesting, because the illicit trade is actually growing the shadow economy in Southeast Asia. So we talked about illicit trade, we're talking about illicit cigarettes, illicit alcohol, many types of goods that are moving across borders, without actually going through the proper channels. And of course, issues of natural resource governance that I talked about. Now on the right hand side, I wanted to show some of the key characteristics that the ASEAN member states share. And many of us have either a current autocratic government or history with autocratic leadership. And this has actually helped to fewer corrupt practices, political instability, that is currently affecting countries like Malaysia, Thailand, and so on and the pandemic, I think it's very important to note how corruption has actually flourished along with the epidemic. And with that, we also know it also because of low levels of accountability, a very politicized public sector, and very corrupt law enforcement much of the time. We have some examples, of course, where this has improved over time, like in the case of Indonesia, but it has also been stopped from being fully independent. But in Malaysia, we have tons of examples of how the law enforcement, including the police and the Malaysian anti corruption commission, are themselves also saddled with corrupt officials and so on. And another very interesting, interesting and important issue, which I will highlight in the next slides, is really about political financing. And how political financing is creating corruption not just within countries to win elections, but it is also corrupting the region, because of illicit financial flows and suspicious donors from foreign sources to actually fuel decisions of how elections can be won by different countries and who should win elections, etc. So we have poor Whistleblower Protection all along. And definitely protection for Investigative Journalists is something that we need to discuss as we go along. Okay. Now, this was earlier shared by tests on the corruption perception index in the country. This is just something for us to take note that most of the countries in the ASEAN region for for 50 number 50 and below, and so that actually speaks very strongly of the need for better collaborative investigative work, to connect the dots, and mainly to follow the money and to actually see where it actually lands up, to track, illicit enrichment, and so on. Okay. Here are some figures on the impact of corruption on doing business. I picked up a couple of details from the World Bank enterprise survey carried out in 2019. This was before the pandemic of course, and it was quite startling really to look at the issue of procurement, the issue of public procurement where 43.5% according to the World Bank, of businesses, whether they are SMEs or a larger business businesses, including multinationals, were actually expected to give gifts to secure government contracts in Southeast Asia. And what was prevailing in the region is also crony capitalism, personal connections, and political patronage, which was actually leading how access to government contracts and lucrative economic resources are actually dished out, as opposed to meritorious companies trying to pay for multimillion dollar contract and so on. So it is all about who you know, rather than what you can do, and what kind of experience you bring to the system. So this is a huge problem in many of the Southeast Asian countries. And it is something that needs urgent reform and something which is I think, structural, much more than cultural.

Although we can argue that culturally, people feel receiving gifts is just normal, because this is how Asians are, you know, you appreciate somebody for doing you a favor, so you give them a gift. Now there are big differences between by buying flowers, then buying an expensive Rolex watch, or buy edible food, as opposed to providing golf club memberships, and houses and learn for free, and etc. and gift giving has always been a problem in which fuels bribery and corruption. So when is it that you draw the line between what whether the gift is a bribe, and whether the gift is a reward for allowing for licenses, tenders to be given access to huge problem where procurement has actually bled the system of many countries. So with that, has also been the evolution of the growth of illicit trade. I mentioned cigarettes and alcohol just now. But I think there are many, many other contraband items. And it gets more serious when we talk about the smuggling of people smuggling of drugs, and many issues which linked to transnational crime. So that I wanted to take us to the next issue. So to think about how corruption actually shackles and jeopardizes doing business in ASEAN. And this might be a very important advocacy approach for us to give real evidence and data to governments when we are advocating for better governance, accountable governance, better democracy with agenda governments that if you don't play corruption, or turn the tide against corruption, businesses would probably leave the region and go invest somewhere where it might be more enabling. So it could actually work in the favor of businesses to support turning the tide against corruption. So here is another example on the import of plastic waste. And this was rather shocking, because we discovered that Malaysia was now importing plastic waste for recycling, and many other industrial purposes. So the countries that were exporting to Malaysia, and to Indonesia and several other countries in the region were Western democracies, like the United States, Canada, the European Union, shockingly, quite ignoring their own domestic policies at home, and just exporting waste to less developed countries. All because China into general, one, eight under the National sword policy, started to burn 24 types of solid waste imports, including plastic, paper waste, etc. So what happened was a global disruption for the market for recyclable material, and they redirected plastic waste to Southeast Asia. And suddenly we started to get complaints. The center that I lead, started to get complaints from residents in small towns like Suma petani, John Jerome, Clang, and even in Butterworth that they were becoming victims of illegal factories, burning plastics. And it was because of this, that we started to launch our own investigation. So the organization that I work with actually does investigative reporting. We are not a journalist organization, but we believe that the only way to come allowed corruption is to get the facts to follow the trail, the paper trail, the money, etc. And then it opened another Pandora's box of worms where we realized that there was some law enforcement agencies in this case, I think it's very interesting to look at customs, and how customs was actually a very central agency that needed to answer many questions over how plastic waste was actually brought into the country. And why so many factories were illegally setting up. So if you look at the picture on the left, this is an infographic that we created. To help Malaysians actually understand why this was becoming a problem. And that we became the top destination in 2018 for plastic waste experts. So 754,000 tonnes of plastic base was imported into Malaysia 2018. By 2019, Malaysian authorities decided then finally to take action after some campaigns and advocacy and people actually banging on the doors of the domestic trade and Consumer Affairs and also the housing ministry etc, including the environment ministry decided to send back about a few 100 tonnes of plastic waste back to the sending countries and close down about 170 illegal recycling factories. So all of this was some launched in a report, we put together an investigative report on plastic waste, coming from Western countries and infiltrating countries in Southeast Asia

because China had suddenly banned the imports of plastic waste into their country. So the impact here is local to global global to local, and the Southeast Asian region was then filled with rubbish, so to speak. And it was a situation in which we were unable to actually manage because then we found that a piece were actually given to some companies to allow for the inputs of plastic waste. And this was really quite devastating because of many of the local councils that were in charge of allowing companies to operate etc, started to say that they were powerless because the instructions were coming from the federal government to allow these these companies to operate, including closing an eye to many other illegal operations that were taking place. So it was a very, very important issue to address. So we actually wrote to the European anti Fraud Office to lodge a complaint. And we were really glad that the European anti Fraud Office had picked up the investigations and then they had issued compounds and summons to some of the European Union factories that were exporting plastic waste into Malaysia. So there was some success here and there on the issue of advocacy to return plastic waste, and to remove it from many of the ports in our country. Okay, the next issue is the issue on natural resource governance. I think this is another very big issue, which is a Southeast Asian cross border issue, because we find that this region is very rich in natural resources. For example, in Myanmar, there was a report that actually looked at trade extraction, where 90% of the world's trade actually comes from Myanmar. And it was extracted in very perilous situations where, of course, the politician, political situation was also weak. And it came from the patchin state where many refugees have left the situation because of the military presence and the violence that have taken place. There have been some very successful advocacies because of investigative work, by journalists and by civil society groups in the Philippines, and in Indonesia, to subscribe to it is criteria for natural resource governance. But it is a growing problem because whether it's about mining, whether it's about coal, or Jade or gold, etc. It has devastating impact on the environment. And this is something that we probably can find a lot of interesting case studies to look at How investigative journalism can call out the stakeholders and the actors, and how people who live on the environment like the Orang Asli communities and indigenous indigenous communities are directly impacted, because large companies are coming in to our countries from outside to actually reap the profits from the whole area of natural resources. Okay. The next of the issues is the Pandora papers that has been highlighted a few times already. But I wanted to take some time so that we can understand what are the issues that we need to look out for in the Southeast Asian region? And what is it that was so successful about the Consortium of Investigative Journalists that actually looked at so many country leaders, political leaders, as well as business leaders that were caught, literally with their pants down on how they had actually first evaded paying tax in their home countries, and started to invest in secret jurisdictions around shell companies. And a very important other area, which is connected so much to transnational crimes, and corruption, which is the issue of money laundering, and all of our countries. And the leaders have very rich history. Not all of our leaders, most of our leaders have very rich histories of how they have laundered money, because money laundering is simple to understand. But it's very complicated in its exercise, where you place in illicit illicitly obtained funds into legal entities. So it gets washed, like in a washing machine, it gets laundered, so that it can be reinvested into real estate into diamond gems, very high end type of property so that it cannot ever be traced where the source of the money is coming from. So that is why in the SDG, goals, 16.4 is actually trying to stop illicit financial flows from developing countries, Southeast Asia, and in particular, Malaysia scored really badly because we were number five from the bottom of the list in allowing for capital flight and money to leave the country. So if, if there were loads to

track illicit enrichment, which we don't have, this is something that investigative journalists can actually work on in their countries that actually do have that like in the Philippines, I understand that you do have a law or innocent, tracking innocent enrichment into en also in Cambodia under your anti corruption law. If correct me if I'm mistaken, but from what I have read and talk to friends in this country, there are some of us that actually have as a declaration laws and tracking illicit enrichment, it would be really, really important to look at what is a legitimate investment, what is not, who are those that are cheating the system, etc. Now there's one more area, which is asset recovery. This is something we learned from the one MDB scandal. And when there was that monumental change of government in 2018, in our country, I was given the opportunity to sit in the one MDB Investigation Committee. And then we realized that out of that the billions that were stolen, and how Najib and his gang of thieves had actually stolen so much of the of the money that the money laundering was so difficult to trace. And how then do you recover the assets? Because you don't know what was a legitimate investment? What was a bogus investment? And how do you actually call for if you remember my first slide on the political security blueprint, it was about mutual legal assistance as well, and how we actually need to get our different legal jurisdictions to also start cooperating together. So there's huge scope to write about this, because there's so little understanding about why countries need to solve corruption by looking at legal mechanisms by looking at following the paper trail and definitely following the money. Okay. I have put the criminal activity again to remind us that when we talk about turning the tide on corruption, we are actually talking about bringing criminals injustice, corruption is a crime. And many of our countries actually have laws that criminalize corruption, but because of the issue of poor accountable governance, corrupt law enforcement, etc. Oftentimes corruption manifests itself in so many complicated layers, that it becomes very, very difficult to find evidence, very difficult to actually get the sender and the receiver, for example, to actually speak, and how do you actually get witnesses to testify in corruption trials that they have partaken in different criminal activity, and so on. So for those investigative journalists, among you that cover court cases, you'd understand the complexity in actually getting corrupt offenders to speak and to testify, unless they get changed from suspects to become crown witnesses in actually allowing for many different corruption scandals to be resolved at the court level. So this is something else for us to actually look at, and to discuss. Okay. Let's have a two or three more slides. And one other big area that I wanted to highlight is the issue of political financing money, politics, and political parties in Southeast Asia. And one very salient feature in common for political parties that we know whatever country that way, is that they generate and handle enormous amounts of money, and have deep roots and tentacles within the economy and business sector. So this is what I wanted to highlight another Nexus that is so important for investigative journalists to write about, which is the cross linking relationship between politics and business, and how businesses sometimes because of the enormous influence, and resources can actually determine who wins elections, which political parties get funded more than the others, and how they also can hide the sources of their donations. Now in Malaysia, the whole issue of donation ever since one MDB, especially have become a huge issue for definition, what is a donation, and the kind of conduits that are used for donations to be made by business entities by corporate, making donations, via foundations, via associations, and via government linked companies or state owned enterprises, in order to re channel that money for political event, or to actually fund a particular political leader. And this has been something which has been prevailing is not a new problem, but it's just getting so much more complex, because political parties are also using secret means of hiding how donations are actually brought into the party. And on some,

on some occasions, as we learned in the one led scan, many of the political party leaders in UMNO, for example, had no idea that the donations were coming from when MDB money, but 31 MDB money. And in fact, one of the political leaders was actually charged for not declaring to the income tax, the source of where that money was coming from it because the money came from the Prime Minister. He just thought it's money for political activity. So we accepted it without even knowing where the source of the money was coming from, from. So the political financing act was resolved a number of things. One is to actually have an independent country controller that will be the point person and it has to be independent, which means there cannot be executive interference or who this person or institution is to actually record all donations and make transparent which donations is coming from where and for which political party. Now the other advocacy that I feel we need to develop following all these different paper trail is how to look at state funding that I understand Indonesia is already practicing it, state funding for political parties and how through our investigations, we can find if state funding can actually reduce corruption. In political parties, because money politics and political financing is really the mother of all corruption, it is something that just makes it so difficult to make political parties accountable, because political parties need money, political parties need money to run your activities. But the entire problem lies with illicit sources of funding, and with political intentions on allowing different types of parties to win different elections. Okay, so this is a one MDB scandal thought as many things, it was all things grand on corruption. And it wasn't just a Malaysia problem. Of course, it was a Malaysia inspired problem. But it involved other Southeast Asian countries as well. So this is an excellent case of why we need to join forces. It involves Singapore. And as much as we talk about how the Department of Justice in the US had actually led the investigations in Singapore, through its monetary authority in Singapore had actually started investigations on the banks and the bankers, the merchant banks that were in Singapore, in which the money was laundered via one MPP, they began the investigation, and they jailed some of their bankers first. So this is quite remarkable, really. And I think we need to really look at how we can understand the financial system in the country, not that I'm praising Singapore or anything, I mean, the biggest financial hub for money laundering, etc. But these are the kind of things we need to crack. And then we had Thailand, which was housing, justo, the main whistleblower of the one MDB scandal, and then he was found out and the Thai authorities took action, and, and sent him back to Switzerland, in in which he had to go through several issues and all that, and he spent some time in the Thai presence as well. And then Indonesia, for seizing the equanimity, the big, luxury yacht, and then how the asset was recovered after there was mutual legal cooperation between the Malaysian government after the change of government, between Indonesia and Malaysia and how that yacht was brought back. And the assets were actually returned. So this is an excellent case of cross border corruption, an excellent case of why investigative journalists were so critically primary in an uncovering, and exposing corruption scandal, without which we would never have had a change of regime, we would never have had, of course, this current political instability and everything that Malaysia is not really used to in terms of politics. But I wanted to end it here by suggesting a few things on what we can do as journalists in the region. So it was also suggested by test just now that we need maybe to do a little bit more research and work on how to develop an investigative journalist network, which I think has so many issues to uncover and has a large scope, either through an existing Alliance or some new initiative, which Kenya Academy might want to also explore, and to look at how we could also collaborate with the Southeast Asia, parties against corruption and some of the issues that we wanted to highlight an investigative journalism that will be a central component of how data can be released for

transnational crimes in Southeast Asia. And then for civil society, how civil society can actually work with the investigative journalists to develop more investigative reporting, evidence based data and to push for data transparency, data driven type of advocacy, targeting and ASEAN community 2025. So that the promise of an ASEAN integrity dialogue is not just something that they pay lip service to, but would be quite serious to actually take some action. And finally, to assist the government if they ever wanted to accept the assistance on pushing evidence based information on what actually needs to change focus, develop around the Southeast Asia Pac against corruption. And one of the things I wanted to highlight is the issue of tech technology in turning the tide against corruption, which I think we didn't really touch on earlier, is the use of things like blockchain technology, machinery day reading, artificial intelligence, etc, that can help to expose corruption. So blockchain is extremely useful in, say, procurement systems, where you actually get a digitized Excel sheets to try to track the entire process of how a particular project wins a bid, and so on and so forth. And to get, of course, technical assistance from un ODC, the United Nations Office for for drugs, drugs and crime, mainly to look at government commitments around the UN Convention against Corruption and the UN transnational organized crime convention, which has three protocols also, all on transnational crime. So one is it is on the flow and smuggling of migrants, the other is on weapons. So all these make very critical information. I mean, you may contact us for, for further details, because we are actually working on some of these issues quite actively, as you figure out your project and how you actually want to structure your investigative writing. I will be very happy to work with you and kill Kenny Academy on this. So thank you very much.

**Tess Bacalla** 2:21:44

Thank you, Cynthia, that sounds very promising. Will we wish we could have one or two questions, but we need to move to our next speaker. But later, maybe we would pick up your points on potential collaboration between media and civil society. That's something that's that should be very promising. And that's something that's already being done like in the US they've, they've been doing that already with very interesting and promising results. Thank you. Thank you so much. So our next speaker is Dr. Dr Nadirsyah Hosen who has been working as a senior lecturer at the Faculty of Law in Monash University since 2015. Prior to this role, Nadir was an associate professor at the School of Law University at the University of Wollongong and he's also internationally known for his expertise in Sharia and Indonesian law. He is a published author, he's a he's written for internationally recognized and refereed journals, and is the author of human rights politics and corruption in Indonesia a critical reflection on the post Soharito era and constitute constitution Sharia and constitutional reform. In Indonesia. He is also co editor of Islam in Southeast Asia. Sorry, and the way of law and religion in in public life. So imagine, imagine ASEAN without without corruption, so he'll be talking about the I mean, ASEAN without corruption solutions to corruption and the way forward in Southeast Asia. Dr. Nadir, it's your turn. Thank you.

**Dr Nadirsyah Hosen** 2:23:35

Thank you. Alright, so Okay. So um, corruption in, in ASEAN Association, Southeast Asian Nations. We don't have a medic solution, actually. So if you want to listen to me, the solutions for corruptions is already presented by the corruption are represented by the previous speakers. I don't have the magic solution. I'm sorry. But I think we could identify the issues you could identify the problems and at the

same time, we could also highlight some efforts that are already conducted by some countries in Southeast Asia. And then hopefully we can we can have imaginations how I see an without corruption city and so the main issue is, as has been discussed at my previous speaker, I think there's a Nick and Cynthia agree It is that corruption is principally a symptom of bad governance. Corruption cannot co exist with the rule of law. But of course, then the issue is whether ASEAN members and the 10 ASEAN members have a good governance or not, whether they have the rule of law or not. That's that's the main is. And then, many scholars looking at corruptions in Asia, they said there is an enemy systemic. And the scholars will say that this is systemic and systematic corruption. And then, despite the economic gains, poverty gaps increase. So what is wrong, what went wrong with with us? And there's also a general recognition that corruption is a problem. So what should we do about this issue? And it's only 8pm in Melbourne, right now, so it's dinner time for me, actually. So if you see that I'm a little bit slow, then you know why? Okay. First, we look at the corruption perception index. So, from my slide here, you can see the, from 2016, to 17, and 2018. But if we go to the next slide, you can see the last two years us 2019 and 2020. can see that our crops in in Asia there are some countries who are really good, like a Singapore, that's ranking number three, number four, in 2019. And then number three, and in 2020, so this is really a good achievement. And then we can really proud that one of ASEAN country could reach number three. But if you look at others, there are many different achievement here. So Malaysia, a drop from 51 in 2019, to number 57, in 2020. Indonesia also drop from number 85. To number 102. Vietnam also drops. Philippines only two points are best. So it's a good one. So But still, it is more than 100 to 113 in 2019, and 150 in 2020. So then, from this thing, we can see that the problem here that there are one country is really good in dealing with anti corruption. There are also countries in Asia who are still struggling to deal with corruption issues. So we don't have a magic solutions that can be used for all SM countries. What we can do is we can learn from each other. And hopefully, it's like a building blocks. We can develop better, good governance systems. But then there is a always an excuse. Whenever we talk about corruption in Asia. They said that there is a culture of corruption, we could not have a solution for corruption in Asia, because the culture lows are the practice of corruption. Is it true? That's the big questions. There's a story from a professor Bruce Marco with when he traveled to Indonesia, and then he was having a meal with several prominent attorneys in India discussing, According to Professor mancow drifted towards nepotism, which he would classify as a form of corruptions. So nepotism is like when you put your family or your friends into several positions without following the procedure of following the correct procedure. And surprisingly, those attorneys didn't see nepotism that way. It is not part of corruptions. And then one attorney said that well what else is power good for right? So this because it is so difficult to achieve upon And when you achieve a position, that's because your big family supported you, they pray for you, they support for you, even they fund for for you. So when you reach the position, then you need to return back all the player or the support by your family. That's why the nepotism is part of the culture. So that's this one of the issue, then people say it is difficult to combat corruption, we don't have a solution, because it is embedded in the culture of Asia. Some of them also compare how we do business in Asia. So in Australia, or in in, in also in other countries, and other Western countries, in order to sign the contract, you can have a one hour meeting, then at the end of the meeting, or you can sign the contract if you're happy, or if you can work walk away. But if you do business in Asia, you could not do that. First, there'll be a conversation, an informal conversation of a coffee unit to make the businessman in Asia, in the coffee. And then they will talk about the family, they will talk about your pets, they need to trust you first. So they try to find a

chemistry between them and you. And then after the expectation is that you also tell them about your family, your pet, then if there's a chemistry, they will invite you to have a dinner, maybe in their house, or in the restaurant is a dinner in their house, the expectation is that you will not come in empty hands, you need to bring something as a gift. Again, they don't see this is this is this is like a primary, this is like a culture of appreciation. And then during dinner, they will in fact be also to be your partner, they will introduce you to their family, like they will coming into their family. And then once they they can trust you and then once they can see that they can get along with you, then they will say okay, I'm going, we're going to meet again tomorrow morning in my office and we are going to sign the contract, then they're going to check. So it is a long process, this is part of the culture, then that's why then some people will say it is impossible to remove corruption entirely in Asia, because the culture is embedded there in the corruptions. Well, I beg to disagree. We use culture as a explanation, not as a justification. So this is different approach if we use as a justification. And then we said that, well, there is nothing we can do. This is this is cultural. But if we use as an explanation, then we can say that, well, we can understand where he's coming from, but we could not legalize this practice. And even so when we talk about the culture, it's a dynamics, right, the current is in Dynamics a 1520 years ago would be different with with the current era. So those who said that we could not come back correctly, Asia, because of the culture of corruptions, I think they miss to see that the corruption is dynamics. And then actually, we could change the culture. Maybe it is not one night, or it's not an overnight solution. It's a long term solution. But at least if we see that way, then we can change the culture, to the education for itself to be informations, and so on so forth. And then another question is, if really, there isn't a set of values of corruptions that were to blame. How do we explain that the different levels of corruption in ASEAN countries, like I already put on my previous slide, about the corruption perception index? There's a Pakistan, Singapore, Hong Kong, Japan and Indonesia. So if, if the argument of culture is right, then surely Singapore will not reach number three in the corruption perception index, for instance. So that's why then if we look at the data, the argument about we could not combat corruption, because of culture is not justified. How about democracy, I think, pretty speaker, probably Sonic already touched These are corruption and democracy. Is it true that democracy a powerful tool to reduce corruption? Well, again, if you look at the data, Singapore is not a full democratic country, but successfully can reduce its corruption level. Singapore again, ranked number three, Australia, a democratic country number 11. Even us number 25th. Right? So it means that well, maybe it's not democracy that we need to reduce the corruptions. That's the argument. So what we what do we need, we need a strong leadership. That's why Singapore is not a full name of the country, but successfully reduced its corruption level, because there's a strong leadership in Singapore. But if we use the same argument, how about North Korea, North Korea is the lowest rung is number 172 in 2020. And then we're not in North Korea to have a strong leader. But the corruption is really hard. So so then there is a big question here is the lessons between corruption and democracy. Another issue is corruption and religion does religion made? The assumption is that, well, if the country establishes their religious law, then the corruption level will drop back examples of Islamic countries, if they occur at the hands of the teeth, cut the hands of the corrupt people, then the assumptions that the corruption level will be reduced significantly. But the data says that the Arab Saudi who establish a Sharia in including Islamic criminal law could sit in the position of 52nd. Right. And then, brunette or someone sit in the person of 30 feet, they try to apply the hood, but they postpone it, bring it on to someone. And other countries like not emulator apps. Reach 21st, Syria, even worse, they're not Korea, it's 178. Italy, in the Philippines, they

follow Catholics, but the diva in the position, Italy 52nd. And Philippines in 115. Brazil also follows Catholic but there is also non default. So then we need to look at other elements. religion itself, still important, especially in ACL, but we could not use religious argument here to say that, well, unless you follow religion strictly, then you could not combat corruption. So the data differs on this, then we have to be careful to follow the arguments about progressives in between anti corruption and religion here. corruption and economic. Some might argue that, well, Singapore is a rich country. buma is a rich country. That's why them they they reach a good ranking in corruption perception index, but then Cambodia and Laos because they are poor, as in countries, then their rich ranking 160 and 134 respectively. Is it true then there is a relationship between corruption and economic here? Well, we have two conflicting situations between corruption and poverty. They unfortunately go hand in hand on one hand, on one level and then where people are forced to bribe to get essential services like health and water corruption is part of survival kit. So then, yes, there is a relationship between corruption and poverty. But then there is also a problem. If we only look at the poverty issues. Here's because there are also international financial institutions like IMF, International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, that puts some money into those poorer countries. So if the assumption is that they don't have money, that's why then there's a corruptions but the other thinking saying, Well, if they don't have money, then they will not come up. Because they don't have something that they can put up. In fact, poor countries, they get the money from foreign aid. But then the government use the money for their own benefit, then there's a questions why so taxpayers in the richer countries be asked to support the left, the left is Lifestyles of the crap, kleptocrats in crop states. Right? So why then Australia, UK or us? What reasons, give financial aid to SM countries if they know that some of the money will be used by government for their personal benefits. So again, there's an issue here between corruption and economic and corruption and prosperity here, whether there is something between income and corruption, because if that's the case, then why don't we increase the salary of government officer, we increase the salary of judges, we increase the salary of the attorneys. We increase the salary of the police, then there will be no corruptions Is it right? Is this the solution to increase the salary? Well, it looks well in Singapore, but not in Indonesia. In Singapore, the salary, the salary of the Prime Minister is one of the highest salary in the world. But in Indonesia, once you increase the salary, it means that you also increase the amount that you're going to bribe the officer. So if the salary level is only, let's say, \$3,000, then the money that you need to bribe the officer, it could be around 20%, or even 50% of \$3,000 of their salary. But then if this their salaries increase to \$10,000, then you only pay \$1,000. bribery, they will refuse it because now they already have \$10,000 their salary, it means that you need to pay more for them. So the increase of salary will also increase the amount that you need to bribe the officer. So again, there is no magic solution. Okay, how about a penal code? What if we increase the benefits? Right? If increasing the salary will not work for all as in countries? What if we increase the penalties? Right? from higher penalty to capital punishment? For instance? Will it work? Well, the problem is that once you increase the penalties, then you also increase the transaction, the negotiations behind the bars. And also, this also could be dangerous, increasing the penalties because the government can use these higher penalty, let's say capital punishments to punish their political opposition or political opponents. They can have a politicization of this anti corruptions effort, yes. And this could be dangerous. And how about the other proposal of reversal of the burden of proof. So usually, in the in the criminal law, if you get accused of doing corruptions, then the government or the attorney or the police Miss to provide evidence, because they are the one who charge you with the

offenses. But reversal of the burden of proof means that anyone who is or has been maintaining a standard of living which is significantly disproportionate to his present or Past non legal income, and who is unable to produce a satisfactory explanation for this could be charged under property law. So let's say that your salary is only \$3,000 per month, but you have a BMW in your car and you are a judge, then, using this reversal of the burden of proof, then you could be arrested, you could be charge of corruption, unless you can prove that this BMW, you get it from, for instance, from from your parents, your parents passed away, and then there's a your inherited some of their money. So then use that money, you buy BMW. So this is reversal of the burden of proof. It was well in Hong Kong and Singapore. But then when I asked the attorneys in Indonesia, why they're in Indonesia, they don't have why they don't have this reversal of the burden of proof. And then the answer, one attorney said to me, Well, Nadia, have you ever visited our parking space? In our atomic unit office? I said, Yes, why? You could see many looks at this card, you can name it, we have it. And then we will be the first victim, if we have reversal of the burden of proof. Because clearly, we could not afford those luxury scars using our our salary. So that's why they don't want to, to propose this reverse of the burden of proof, because they will be the first fix. So despite the fact that these solutions works quite well, in Hong Kong, it's not well, that's not mean that we could easily transfer this model to other countries. Okay, and then why don't we just go to the public about corruption in order to find the solutions? Then we need to understand why do people accept the corruptions? Some of the enzyme is that this is a shortcut to long bureaucracy. Right? So we need to, if we want to apply for a license, from government, for instance, if we follow all the rules, it will take 21 days, and there is no guarantee that at the end of 21 days, we could get the license or the permit. But then if we pay the money, then in three hours, we can get the product license. So this is a short cut long bit of coffee. And and that's why there is no choice for for people except to to to accept the corruptions they want to accept corruption because there is a benefit for them to bribe the officer. Nada another another enzyme, we are the answer is that well, this is a business as usual. I mean, it has been a practice law in the last 50 100 years, why we want to change it, as long as it is clear how much that we pay, whether it is 2% or 5% will be fine. The businessman will get annoyed if there is no standard of fees that they need to pay for the for for the officer. But if they if in one department, they need to pay two percents in the other, the other about the mandated to pay 10% then then they say that this is not right. But if they know that beforehand, that they have to pay 2% small or 5% more than they can they can put this course as part of production costs. And then again, they said that we don't have any problem because then we are going to increase the price of the products or services. So there we are on people with pain for this for the crops that the officer received. Notice we are a businessman, we know how to calculate. So we are fine with the corruptions so that some of the perceptions they get from the corrupt for from the public about corruptions and again, with this in mind, how we provide a solution. So I'll come to that later on. So, now we need to look at there are three levels of corruptions, right? There's a desktop level, mid level and low level, then the solution to each level would be different. We could not have one magic solution, as I already stated many times. So we the top level, is what they call it, greed, corruptions. They already have a good salary, they already have a good life. I'd like for instance, a chief justice. Of course, in Indonesia, our state of corruptions are the, the Speaker of the Parliament, since they are the rich people. But why they still receive the money, we should call it due to greed. This is great corruptions. And with this level, and the solution will be different. mid level, we have a systemic corruption, it means that if you work in the government, it doesn't matter whether you take the money, whether you are caught up or not, you're

part of the team, and the team is corrupt. Right? So this is systemic corruption, even if you don't take the money by yourself, but then you will get the money, because they were going to spread the amount, and everyone will be happy. Right? And then they can continue to practice, this is what's called a system of corruptions. But then again, the solution will be different. For the mid level, for the low level, this is a petty corruption based on me, not great, right. So because of the salary, the salary level of policemen in Indonesia is very low, for instance, then,

2:51:54

if, if you if you're driving, and then you break the laws, like for some of us, you pass the traffic lights, the red line, then, usually, Indonesia, it's common practice that you're willing to give the money to the police. And the police will accept it not because they are greedy, but based on the need, they have the low level salary. So, with these three different level, the solution will also be different. So let us look at the solution in each level. So for the top level, the method is frying the big fish. So when there is a culture of engaging in Acts with impunity, the only way to begin backing up, he is for a number of major corrupt figures to be convicted and punished. So for the anti corruption agencies or for the attorney, then they need to get some of the the figures in the government with a just a prime minister, the Minister, or any other top positions, to be convicted and panies. This will give the message that other minister doesn't give a message and also a warning so that other minister and other opposition will not do the same. So find the big fish. So the greedy people will will will think twice to accept the money because of the warning here. But this will only work this solution, if there is a political will from the ruling party, or the relevant government officials. Right. But as I said, the extent to ask the money politics is the biggest problem. So then if they don't have a political will here, then suddenly this kind of solution will not work. And then we need also to setting up a special anti corruption commissions. Why we need to have this special anti corruption Commission's that we already have in Singapore and Hong Kong and also in some other countries. That's because the perceptions that there is a low salary for the police and for the public prosecutor. And they have limited powers. So we set up these special anti corruption agencies or commissions, we give them a good money, and then we also give them more power so that they can frying the big fish. So this the strategy at the top level. The strategy, the strategy of the mid level, which is a systemic and systematic corruptions, they have a good governance here Come about the transparency, accountability, rule of law to regulation, bureaucratic reform, this is the solution. Right? If, for instance, we try only to catch the fish here, without have without having bureaucratic level, transparency, accountability, then in the long term, it will not work at all this Saturday. So the strategy for catching the big fish is on a will work for the top level. For that for the mid level, we need to have a good governance here. This is the biggest effort for, for governments to have transparency and accountability in order to deal with stomach and systematic corruption. So this is the solution for the mid level. And the solution for the low level corruption is increasing the salary, especially for police judges, Department of Public Prosecutor, DPP, test officer, teachers, and attorneys, and so on. So, so you see that there are different solutions here. Depends on on the level. Right now, some of the case studies that you can have here imbalance are, I think, Nick already mentioned about this imbalance. They have many independent organizations, the National anti corruption Commission, the Electoral Commission, the Office of the Ombudsman, the Human Rights Commission, and others, and also the other non state parties. But what went wrong with the system? Why has corruption not placing, despite the fact that they already have these agencies,

**Dr Nadirsyah Hosen 2:56:58**

so many different agencies, and they have uncoordinated work, so it makes them less efficient. It's like what Nick already said to ask if there are many, too many rules, too many regulations is confusing. And then sometimes there is no clear rules about that. And even conflicting rules. The same happened with many agencies years, if too many different agencies dealing with corruption, then there will be an uncoordinated look, and less efficient. Okay, so I already have three minutes or two minutes left, I'm sorry. So and the agencies do not start out with a clean slate. In flexible rules, political interference, and nostrum practice can produce political support. So there is also this is enemy's underground courts. So I will not tactic because I don't have time for this. Okay. So, this is the conclusions we did. A good collection needs to be dealt with in a holistic manner. Good laws good, slow and fair use your system in terms of what heals. But then back to the questions about the ASEAN and corruption itself. I give you the link here is about the ASEAN pact. So this ASEAN pact is a and the agencies and the agencies in some ASEAN members already signed an agreement to have a collaborations, then you can check the website there. I think Cynthia already also mentioned about the ASEAN members have ratified the UN Convention against Corruption. And talking about the political Social Security Community Blueprint. I can also add about as an economic community. But services like a single market, like an EU, you already signed in at the end of 2015. But up until now we don't see much about this, etc. and their focus is more on the economic. And my last slide. Here's why we don't have a magic solution for the essence because in ASEAN members, the 10 ASEAN members, they have different legal systems. They have different languages. They have different economic achievements, the different cultures and religions. Some of them even consider like a safe haven. So despite the fact that Singapore is, is one of the top three countries in the world with corruptions, but many corrupt people in Asia think Singapore is a safe haven because there is no exhibitions. Once they corrupt. In America, then they can run away and then live in Singapore and the police in assemblies cannot touch them. And for The AC AC Economic Community, there is no law enforcement because they're really focused on the economics. So I finished my presentation. Hopefully we can ever discuss it very much.

**Tess Bacalla 3:00:15**

Thank you, Dr. Nadir, you've given us some very thought provoking questions, among others that I think we need to be pondering in us, journalists, those of us in the media, in part to help us. I mean, pondering those questions could help inform among others, how we frame for examples, the stories and corruption that we that we write or produce. I understand we have a question at the end. But before we move into, we have very little time left we need to move to our current a our panel discussion now. But go ahead, please.

**Muhammad Adib Faiz 3:00:58**

Would you like me to read out the question,

**Tess Bacalla 3:01:00**

please go ahead.

**Muhammad Adib Faiz 3:01:01**

Alright. So Dr. Nadir, you talked about how culture is used to explain corruption. Sorry, no, not not sorry. I think I sent the wrong one. That was for a doctor. That was for Dr. Torplus. Give me one moment. Okay. There's another question for Dr. Nadir, specifically. In the 80s and 90s. We saw massive protests against corrupt rulers in Indonesia, Philippines and Malaysia. What role do movements such as reformasi play and solving corruption? In other words, how do social movements, grassroots movements? How can that be a solution for ending corruption in ASEAN?

**Dr Nadirsyah Hosen** 3:01:41

Yes, that social movement is really important to gain the momentum. And then once you get the momentum, then then people could propose to make an amendment to anti corruption laws, and also to find the big fish to follow that, that method. But you could not stop there. Right. That's what happened in those countries that that you asked efforts, the efforts to combat corruptions after several years, then they lost the moment the momentum again, right? Then it then everything back to a business as usual. So then the question is for activists how to keep the momentum. Right. And sometimes it's difficult. Like, for instance, in Indonesia, after the 2019 presidential elections, President Joko, we get the momentum to run the company for the second term. But then his government amended the 2,002k Piccolo anti corruption commission law, which reduced the power of typica. So so this is the problem instead of trying to strengthen a because he just won the elections. People supported him, right. But he reduced the power of anti corruption commissions. At the time, there was another massive demonstrations. But it lost the momentum. Because we just finished the election, and people fought it for a second time. So that's why then we need to keep the momentum.

**Muhammad Adib Faiz** 3:03:37

Yes. Suddenly, Tess did you want to move on to the q&a session?

**Tess Bacalla** 3:03:44

Yeah. You have another question here. Is that for Dr. Nadir also? Yes.

**Muhammad Adib Faiz** 3:03:49

That is for Dr. Torplus? Would you like me to repeat the question? So? Okay, all right. So this question is for So for Dr. Torplus, you talked about how culture is used to explain corruption? Are there any aspects of traditional Southeast Asian culture that can reduce corruption?

**Dr Torplus Nick Yomnak** 3:04:17

Can you hear me? Yes. Okay. I think Dr. Nadir has a covered I think you I think that was

**Muhammad Adib Faiz** 3:04:25

Dr. Nadir? Yes.

**Dr Nadirsyah Hosen** 3:04:31

Yes, sure. Yes. Our approach is that we don't use culture as a justification. We use culture as an explanation. Then if, then the question whether there is also an element in the culture that we can use to justify the anti corruption effort, right? Well, in Asia, there's also a culture of shaming, right. So then

Once your family got arrested, it will bring shame to do harm to the whole family. But then we can use that in order to combat the corruptions The problem is that of course then in in, in, in the cities in the metropolitan cities, no longer we have such a bond in a big family, we become individualist, more and more individualist. Right. So then that even this culture is like a direct contradictions with the with the with the mother traditions of supporting your family. When you reach the proposition, we need to support you, right. But once you are declared as a corrupt, you are arrested, then the family said that, well, we still need to support this guy, right? Because we already get some so much money so much. So, what's the loss of so do then there is some suggestions, we could post the picture of the club and in the media, then this is like sharing even in social media, you could put them there, at least then the family will will feel that Well, there's this big dislike being the shampoo to our family. But there's of course, then there is there's another issue about the human rights. Right. So for then we need to, to be careful if we want to use these methods. But my point is that I don't believe that the culture in in Asia accommodates corruptions like that. Right? I think I think those who use a corruption issues or cultural issues, it's like, it's like a garbage bin? Because because they could not provide any other solutions. I did they say that? Well, this is a culture.

**Muhammad Adib Faiz** 3:07:10

So easy explanation

**Dr Nadirsyah Hosen** 3:07:12

easy explanation. Yes. And then then an end, sadly to say some of people outside Asia, like from international monetary fund the World Bank, but some of them also subscribe to these ideas. Right? They say that what whatever you do in Asia, you could not remove corruption, because there's a culture.

**Tess Bacalla** 3:07:37

You're one of those sorry, Dr. Nadir is one of those narratives that need to be debunked by the media, if we are to write about corruption the way we should and in a manner that will help address the issue of corruption in the region in in in our respective countries at the very least, and other narratives that need to be debunked as well. When it comes to covering corruption. Can you expound on this a bit more? Yeah, I agree. Yeah, sure. Yeah,

**Dr Torplus Nick Yomnak** 3:08:10

just a little bit to this, I happen to got to read the new article by Professor Bo Rothstein of the Gothenburg University. He mentioned about this as well. And similar to what Medea has just mentioned that this is just like, an easy way out for explaining why corruptions still prevail in different countries, especially in ASEAN and Asia's country. And he he suggested that there's a there are lots and actually there are lots of surveys which actually ask people how they think about corruption and 90% of the of the people who answer the survey suggested that they hate corruption, and they think that corruption is devastated to the country. But the way that factors the structure, the political structure, the socio political structure in in many countries, just facilitates this he called for a standard standard operating procedures are the countries which means this standard proceeding for standard operating procedures, which allow us to which actually provoke us to tech tend to corrupt actually, if you're on make me

maybe under contract May, what should I say may contradict our our thoughts, and ethics and and culture. So it's not the culture that that would that could be the the answer to why authentic production fails or corruption prevailed, but because of other factors of structural factors as well. Yeah.

**Tess Bacalla** 3:09:47

And not subscribing to that thinking would have a lot of impact, I think on how we would cover corruption. We in the media. Okay, there's another question here. The weakening of corruption eradication has occurred in the last two years in Indonesia with the amendment of the Yeah, as mentioned by dr. D earlier, the election of people who have violated ethics to become leader of the organization and the dismissal of investigators with integrity through a system of stopping status transfers known as the nationalist insight test, or the beatable UK. My question is, does the same thing happen in other ASEAN countries? And how journalists across the region can collaborate in order to tackle this issue? Any one of our speakers could address this question.

**Dr Nadirsyah Hosen** 3:10:35

So just to give the background of that question, and things that are TWK that he or she mentions, it's about civic knowledge base. So in the last two years, Indonesia is dealing with radicalism and extremism, and politicization of religion. But then the government smartly used this narrative. They said that there is a Taliban in Topeka in the in the Pentecostal agencies. And then then, when the Jokowi administration amended the law, that they said that now, the independent members of Caprica suit become the government official. And then they need to pass the test what they call the civic knowledge base, and then around 57 didn't pass the pace, because they're not nationalists enough. And they are part of the study by the radicals. Right. So they use this idea of religion in order to remove the efforts of anti coastal Commission's, and this is really ridiculous, because some of this members of the this 57 or 50, or 57, that didn't pass the city college days, they are not Muslims. So they saw no way they will be subscribed to the idea of Taliban of extremism. But again, successfully with the support of people in Indonesia, using this narrative. Then, the government reduced the capacity of capita, so that whether this also happened in other regional countries, I don't know. So maybe some of you can explain.

**Tessa Bacalla, PH Asia Dem Chronicles** 3:12:24

Yeah, to be sure there are similar efforts elsewhere in Southeast Asia, including the Philippines to weaken institutions that otherwise have an important role to play in, in addressing corruption. There's one question here, addressed to Cynthia, suspected grafters from my country sometimes hide in other ASEAN countries to avoid legal proceedings. How should ASEAN take a role to deal with issues like this?

**Cynthia Gabriel** 3:12:53

Thank you for that question. Before I answer that question, I just wanted to say something about the law enforcement. The question earlier that Dr. Nadia was answering. In the case of Malaysia, we have always looked up to Caprica, Indonesia as a good example of what an anti corruption commission should be, and should actually do that. Even politicians and judges fear the anti corruption commission it was that independent before the law amended, and I think this is where I am having a little bit of difficulty with the discussions around culture. Because, for me, the issue is about power. Corruption is

about power. And it is not something which is cultural, it becomes cultural, when power allows it to permeate into society for the benefit of quid pro quo for the benefit of a status quo of the situation. So what happened what is happening to our Malaysian anti corruption commission now I think it's really quite a crisis because we find that officials in the commission are stealing the money that they had seized as part of the stolen assets. So now they become thieves themselves, because it's so tempting to actually look at all the loot that was stolen over the entire one MDP causes etc. So there's no more trust that you can place on a commission. So how do you deal with with addressing power to ensure that a downgrade like what happened to Caprica call it a downgrade, because it was such an independent institution before will not happen to other institutions. So what is it that civil society journalists and people can do? I think it's very, very important question to answer that. It should be election pledges, it should be something codified or something that's written there. If we can hold governments to ensure that bills or Parliament's will not be passed to allow for greater executive interference and all that. So it's a power question. So in relation to that, this, this question to me that I wanted to answer is also linked, because it's about how corrupted offenders actually allowed to avoid legal proceedings and to hide in some countries. So even in our story of the one MDB, we are still unable to track the main culprits who stole all that loot. And we hear that it's actually China that the tidy Jolo, and that's hiding the criminal in exchange for economic benefits that they can have in the country. So it's a win win situation for both but for ASEAN. There needs to be developed, more established, like extradition treaties, how do you actually get particular corrupt offender hiding, say in, in Laos, or in Myanmar, or in Cambodia, when they actually need to be brought to Malaysia or Singapore or Philippines to be tried in court, etc, there's no system systemic process that I'm aware of that will allow these things to happen. So this is where it's really important to develop that kind of cohesive narrative to be built up, that this is what Asya needs to do in the context of 2025, and what the political security blueprint needs to mean for the ASEAN people because it is a national security issue. And one more line on national security, if any of us are following what's happening in the US. It's quite interesting how abidan administration has actually now defined corruption as a national security issue. And whether that is something ASEAN needs to also evolve in that direction, that it actually jeopardizes the security of nations, if we allow corrupt leaders to just be left without any kind of accountability mechanism placed on them. So these are very important questions to answer. But just a quick answer is there's no structure at the moment to actually allow those hiding outside the country to be brought back. Yeah,

**Tessa Bacalla, PH Asia Dem Chronicles** 3:17:52

this is a quick follow up, this might sound cynical, but should we even be looking to assay and the regional bloc, for you know, for measures to address corruption in the issue, given how we at least that's the widespread perception of ASEAN, the regional bloc, not the region? Yeah. Would you like to address that? Yeah. Cynthia? No, I was hoping you would react to that. Yeah. Sorry. Silvia.

**Cynthia Gabriel** 3:18:21

Yeah. Is there another question?

**Muhammad Adib Faiz** 3:18:26

No, Tess was asking the question about us Tess do you want to repeat?

**Tessa Bacalla, PH Asia Dem Chronicles 3:18:31**

Yeah, no, I said, should we even be looking to ASEAN, the regional bloc, on matters like this, given how we, you know, ASEAN is again, the regional bloc, not the region? Yeah.

**Cynthia Gabriel 3:18:44**

Um, I, I actually think that strategy should be two prong. One is to develop strength among ourselves. No, knowing that the regional bloc is weak. But sometimes they can surprise us like what is happening with the summit and how they have been Myanmar out, it's quite shocking that a weak Association would actually take that kind of action. But it was also because the, there's enough pressure to ensure that a decision like that could be taken. So I just think that as we strengthen our own discourse and our own narrative, then it becomes stronger when we want to engage with the ASEAN Secretariat or the ASEAN Foundation, etc. But at the same time, I also think that within ASEAN as a, as a bloc of governments will be the hardest to penetrate. There are many other sectors in ASEAN that we might need to engage to be stakeholders that can that can join us in the fight against corruption. And one of it could be the legal networks, the academic networks, and also the corporate sector, which in many of our eyes are also the crooks, because they're usually the givers of the bribes. The ones that facilitate and enable a particular corruption to happen sometimes, it could also be because that's just how it is. That's just in one of my slides, I talked about the cost of doing business, that you have to ensure a certain portion of money is actually given out for corruption, for gift giving, for bribes, etc. And whether turning the tide against corruption will also would also mean gaining support from other stakeholders. Before we deal with the governments, which are the most difficult.

**Tessa Bacalla, PH Asia Dem Chronicles 3:20:54**

Thank you, Cynthia, there's a question here from Danny addressed to me. Is there any journalism collaborative that focuses on corruption in ASEAN? Honestly, I don't know of any but maybe any one of the participants sorry to single out Carmela PCIJ of bc I know she's here with you know, of any I'm not aware, focusing on ASEAN I suppose Danny men see on the block.

**Tess Bacalla 3:21:26**

Or maybe

**Tessa Bacalla, PH Asia Dem Chronicles 3:21:27**

the region as well. Anyone? Anywhere, you could type it into different organization?

**Carmela 3:21:35**

I'm not. I'm not sure I don't think.

**Tessa Bacalla, PH Asia Dem Chronicles 3:21:42**

Yeah. Okay. Thank you, Carmela. I think this presents an opportunity. This is something to explore. Kiniacademy, for example, might want to consider this. But yeah, I written studies on ASEAN, including on migrant labor. And my sense was that there's much to look into where how it functions is concerned. So that's my strong sense at the time, I wrote some stories on, on, on, on issues surrounding the

**Cynthia Gabriel** 3:22:20

follow up and to understand whether journalists would be motivated to set up not a whole Institute or structure, but like an alliance to do more writing for the region, investigative type of writing for the region, because it can be quite, you know, not so motivating to look at ASEAN as block. Because then we get into all these non interference issues and stuff, but about calling out corruption through what I was trying to espouse just now about transnational crimes, cross border, corruption issues, etc. There can be more narratives written around that kind of Alliance would be so powerful. Yeah,

**Tessa Bacalla, PH Asia Dem Chronicles** 3:23:14

yeah. That's quite exciting to hear. And you've given us very good leads for potential stories. Actually, I wanted to say that there was a question here from Cherry Salazar a PCI AJ, she asked this earlier, digital Tech has made publishing and content creation more accessible. Anyone cannot post their own articles and videos online, with social media essentially programmed to be like echo chambers, legitimate media is struggling to preserve public trust. How can we strengthen and maintain that trust and integrity in this age of this information? Even if our stores are groundbait? Breaking? It won't affect policy so much, if it's easily dismissed by propagandists if public doubts are integrity, astronauts, so this is addressed to me. I'm a firm believer, and this might sound very How would I call it I'm a firm believer in the power of stories. When I was doing when I was actively writing as an investigative journalist. I posed this question to myself, what impact would my story have, given the amount of work I, I did, the risks I talked to be able to put out the stories but I figured maybe the impact is not immediate. But it's you know, it's just it's one story at a time and taking things one step at a time in, in our effort to again I go back to what I said earlier about raising the level of discourse if only, you know x number of people, readers get to understand the sitch, the situation at hand, maybe along the way, more people will will understand. So I am I tried to maintain that that mindset in the course of my my journalistic work yeah, this is it's far more difficult nowadays, I think to be putting out investigative stories because we're up against all these challenges including this information, of course, the thralls you know, being deployed no less by, by by the government, but imagine the world or imagine our individual countries without these kinds of stories coming out, you know, people remaining clueless as to what's happening. So that's, that's a huge price to pay. I think the public not understanding at all what's going on. So yeah, stories can ECB can share reports, it can easily be dismissed by propagandists, but traders, I believe, would still be able to distinguish a good story, a well researched story from one that's you know, that's really just caught up to code, fake news out there are still discerning readers, and we need to cater to them. And because they're looking for those kinds of stories, and we need to be able to, you know, to fill that gap, where where our public needs for for well written, well researched, care fully put together stories, is concerned. So that's how I would respond to any other maybe from the perspectives of our, our speakers, Nadir, Nick, Cynthia, any thoughts?

**Dr Nadirsyah Hosen** 3:26:41

Yes, I think, because we live in a digital era. So then we need to combine between between the stories published by the journalists, in the public media, with a posting in the social media. But there is also another another issue, I think, which is that it's easy to access and publish any stories through social media right now. Whereas if we want to have a quality investigative report from journalists, then usually it is not cheap. And then and then the readers need to pay to access from the from the website of the

media. And so this is a problem, right? There's a such a good report from a temple, I see that some of Temple magazines, journalists are currently here, there is some good investigative report from Quran temple or modular temple. But because we need to pay the subscription, then not many people can read it. And then people will only lead some moles, or some course if all the propaganda is it needed social media, there's another issue that no one will read your report if they have to pay. So that is there's a good there should be a balanced approach. Here's the media but the same times, how come the media sort of five with this under this digital era, but if there is no significant? So there's another is? I don't know what what you're talking about the test.

**Tessa Bacalla, PH Asia Dem Chronicles 3:28:24**

The other way of looking at it is there are readers willing to pay for good stories. That's why there are some media outlets that still have subscription based. So I think we need to revisit our notion about our readers that they're just after three stories, you know, because there are readers, I think, new narrative, I'm a subscriber to the new narrative. I, I mean, this is my second year, with my annual subscription, meaning to say, there are still segments of readers, I think, that are willing to pay for good stories. But we also need In fact, in need to think in terms of how to make our stories more accessible. And while trying to generate more revenue streams, for example, get getting creative about it, so that we will be able to sustain our operations as media and continue to provide our readers our audience with good stories. Any thoughts from Nick and from Cynthia maybe from civil society and academic perspective? And then we'll final question.

**Cynthia Gabriel 3:29:28**

I think it needs to be exciting. So it does not. It should not be daunting, that Oh, with just like, oh my god, what do what do we do, but it could start giving them any more ideas and work. But it could start like what Kenny Academy is doing now is to develop more programs like this, where we generate more content because part of what I understand from all My engagement with journalists is lack of investigative flavor, at least formulation journalists. So they're good at writing stories based on what happened in the news today. And to capture just that. So the whole capacity building that's required to prove people to follow the paper trail, follow the money, etc, requires a lot more time and energy, which also needs resources. So those things need to be established. In order for us to map some issues that we might want to take on in a pilot project for say, six months that we want to develop 20 stories that are cross border that are not specific to one country alone. And then that can be built so that we can share it on all the different media that was shared just now like rappler, MalaysiaKini different new narrative and all that, that, that can actually start posting these stories. And then we can have a port anticorruption, blogs, etc, just to build some interest that these issues are real, because I think we need to step up the plate because the criminals have their plate. So we need to defeat the narrative that they're using to counter it with, you know, different narratives to fight corruption. So the title of his event is great, because it's called turning the tide. But turning the tide require requires a whole initiative. So I would just suggest that we like have like a pilot thing that if we can find resources to do a 20 or 30 stories thing over six months, pocket, maybe at Kelley Academy, or some entity that willing to actually expand it beyond this, because corruption is not just about corruption, it actually links to the rule of law, democratic human rights, human rights and everything. So it can actually encompass many issues. And I think climate change is like a huge area that has many intersections with corruption. So there's many

things that we can, we can let, but in order to do all that, I think the resources and the time, etc, needs to be established that it's a project, and it can continue.

**Tessa Bacalla, PH Asia Dem Chronicles 3:32:38**

Thank you. We would like to hear from Nick as well. There's a note here, please, briefly mentioned your point on corrupt ghosts, quote, unquote, you can and then maybe explain how journalists can include this information in their narratives. Yeah. could you address that also make your close?

**Dr Torplus Nick Yomnak 3:33:03**

You mean, that goes that I didn't really go by? chance to present. Okay, I'll go very briefly, very briefly. Yeah, within two or three minutes. So basically, just to address the first question first, that is a very, very difficult questions. I think like the biggest investigative journalist, agencies in Thailand is still struggling with that, not how to how to be sustained how to live in this era of social media, essentially. But my, my, my suggestion from the from evidence that I've seen is to try to create a participation theory platform with with with the people more for example, in the case that I show when people feel that their voice can be heard and their voice matters, for example, they can just take a picture of this light pole and they can send it to one of the one of the news agencies and then then the news agencies investigate this case. And then it became a big stories in the country, they feel that oh, this is not done or found by a very famous journalist, journalist, but just found by by just a person who knows what names and then it creates change. And then by doing this, people will feel that that that news agency is like investigative journalist matters. And as a as an evidence the page that I that I am in relationship with, for example, the must share page which which was which got this picture from the from this an ordinary citizens got like a 10,000 more light in a day. So if we transfer and transfer, translate that into monetary compensation that that's very highly significant change for a news agency. So but I don't I do not really know if this can be generalized into into a bigger picture. But to kind of like create an interactive interaction with normal citizens would would be part of the answer, I guess. But But you answer this questions, all of you answer this question better than me. And back back to the ghost. That's a pot that I didn't get the chance because I got through my 30 minutes already, but I just want to explain that currently, like economics has reached to a point that we are unable to explain many of the questions. So a new relatively new approach of a behavioral experiment experiment, experimental economics has emerged, and they have been trying to explain cheating or corrupt activities as well. They do not believe that neoclassical economics like cause and benefit will explain everything, they try to understand why people behavior differs in different situation circumstance. So for example, we found that many of the type and additions like to go to temples and make donations and apparently those politicians had to go to the temple or those who just commit corrupt crimes we do we look at that asset disclosure. So it is highly correlated with, with the number with with the amount of money they donated to the temple. So that's kind of like, we call it moral licensing. So it's, so we, we compare it with a nun ghost who would like like, like, go into temples and make donations Well, before that, they commit corruption crimes that they do the Donate to feel, make them feel good about themselves. Or there are many other kinds of activities, so so. So in order to fight these types of behavior, counter, not fight to counter this kind of behavior, we need to come up with other solutions rather than just higher democracy, more laws and regulations, and so on and so forth, by just by trying to nudge their behavior. For example, in one experiment, they put wording from the Bible in before politician declare assets. And

apparently, when they see something like that, and they sign that they will disclose with truthful information, before writing the information, though, there tend to be more truth, truthful to the information. So it's something as small as this could create big change. But again, this is a very small case, it may not be able to, I may not be able to generalize this into a bigger picture. But but it just opened up a new perspective to new solutions to new perspective, new approach to tackle the problem. So may be of interest to journalists, who are interested in new approach. Yeah,

**Tessa Bacalla, PH Asia Dem Chronicles 3:38:42**

yeah. Thank you so much, Nick, thank you very much. Thank you to all our speakers. Nadir. And Cynthia, I've personally been, you know, I've been accepted fat from just listening to the discussions, the thoughts you shared, the challenge for us journalists is maybe, you know, revisit our notion of corruption and how we frame corruptions, the narratives that we that we propagate maybe directly or indirectly through our stories. But I want to highlight on the final before we move on to, to Danny for the final remarks. I hope that this is just the beginning of a conversation around the potential for collaboration. It's high time that we in Southeast Asia, you know, join forces and explored maybe more creative solutions to what the what's confronting us in the area of corruption, certainly, as Cynthia has highlighted earlier, there's still a lot of room to explore in terms of stories to write to put out. And, in the meantime, corruption continues to evolve. So we need to be we need to be acting fast. Soon enough, I think the momentum is there. And we need to be able to move forward, hopefully more constructively, if only to address what we're focused on during this, this discussion. So thank you. Thank you, everyone, on behalf of Kenya Academy, and thank you to all our participants. Now I turn to Adam, Should I turn over the virtual floor to Danny? Yes, he should. Thanks. Please. Go ahead, Danny. Yeah,

**Danny Yong 3:40:29**

thank you, everybody, what a great discussion was in it. So I'm heading a heading the call from Cynthia and Tess. There are things we can do together. And I thank you, Cynthia, for encouraging all the journalists to collaborate and talk to each other, this is really very much for them. And we do hope that we make it a habit, you know, to, to, to just reach across, if there's something that's happening cross border that is, you know, that we can reach out to our colleagues, the whatsapp group has been set up, and most of you are already in there. And that's supposed to facilitate that. That, so, I've already just got a I've already just got a sin. case number two talks about, I probably, you know, bigger brains a bit. And tests, I've also asked you for your number. And, you know, maybe one of these days, we can talk someone, but you know, this is not the end. This, we I will be talking to the funders and may we may have we have some ideas for more master classes coming up. And it's all to do with ASEAN and ASEAN related topics. So as I mentioned earlier, the recording is available. If you can go to C four.org. In a few days, you will see the video first the recording of the whole session, and then you will see the transcription and the and the slides as well. Okay, so thank you, everybody. Thank you, speakers. For what a great for a great session. And I'll Good luck and I look forward to all your stories. Bye, everybody.

**Tessa Bacalla, PH Asia Dem Chronicles 3:42:19**

Bye, everyone. Thank you.

**Dr Nadirsyah Hosen** 3:42:21

Thank you, Danny. Thank you, Adib. Thank you.

**Muhammad Adib Faiz** 3:42:23

Thank you. Thank you for inviting me.

3:42:25

And I just thank you.

**Tessa Bacalla, PH Asia Dem Chronicles** 3:42:26

Hey, hi everyone.

**Muhammad Adib Faiz** 3:42:28

Nice to meet you all. Okay, right. All right. Well, I'll close this this meeting room, man, we'll see you another time. Right.