

Power and the Press — Mahathir

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KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. — Education Minister Dr. Mahathir Mohamed has called on the mass media to use, constructively and for the good of the country, their "tremendous power" in influencing and shaping public opinion.

"It is important that those who wield this power of mass communication appreciate this (its effectiveness)," he said, when opening a two-day seminar on New Concepts in Communication Development organised by the Mara Institute of Technology.

THE MASS MEDIA ARE TOLD: USE YOUR INFLUENCE ON PEOPLE WITH WISDOM

Dr. Mahathir also criticised the mass media for occasional errors in reporting, and for not being able to accept criticism.

Turning to the anti-drug-campaign in the country, he said he was happy the mass media had made people more conscious of the problem by reporting on drug abuse cases and also commenting editorially

on steps to be taken to solve the problems.

"However, the media themselves have not been as effective as they could be in the counter-offensive on drugs. There is no planned or concerted effort," he said.

He hoped those attending the seminar would learn more about the power of the mass media and handle it as a "potent weapon."

New Straits Times assistant group editor Dr. Noordin Sopiee, in a paper on Mass Media Professionalism in Malaysia, called for more in-depth reporting and analysis rather than superficial treatment of stories and events.

"There should be more lively writing" and the mass media should also strive to do more investigative, assertive and commentative journalism.

He said that through such reports the mass media could contribute towards the political, economic, social and psychological development of the country.

Training

It should also aim at improving the techniques, efficiency, effectiveness and the quality of informing, educating, entertaining and influencing public and private sector policy, he said.

"Much of the hope in improving Malaysian journalism lies in training — before a person becomes a journalist, after he is recruited, and continuously after that" Dr. Noordin said.

About 50 participants from Government departments and private public relations organisations are attending the two-day seminar.