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Media-Dominate

EXAMINE PRESS FREEDOM AND PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS IN ASIA

KUALA LUMPUR, May 16 (Bernama) -- Press freedom and professional standards in Asia have to be examined urgently to counter western media domination in the fastest growing economic region in the world, a seminar here was told today.

Indian Express editorial consultant T.S.J. George said the media in the advanced countries who believed that Asia was the future world's centre had taken steps to keep their influence and dominance here.

He said Australia's Fairfax Group had just launched a publication called "Asia Pacific Magazine" while British interests were launching a new publication called "Southeast Asia Monitor" and Time magazine was moving its international headquarters to Asia.

"These new initiatives will shove up the work already being done by the International Herald Tribune and the Asian Wall Street Journal and other publications from the west," he said in his keynote address at the seminar on Press Freedom and Professional Standards in Asia, here.

He also said that some of the world's biggest companies today were media companies and they controlled everything from producing raw material to final delivery systems.

"By the year 2000 five to 10 giant corporations will control the world important newspapers, magazines, books, broadcast stations, cable channels, music recording, movies and audio video business.

"These five to 10 giants will decide what we read, use, watch or hear." he said.

He said these latest development was aimed at controlling the hearts and minds of Asians and dominating the public opinion here.

"Circumstances that have developed around us give the subject of press freedom and professional standards a new and urgent relevance and we can profit only if we examine them free of the popular myths associated with them," he added.

George said the first thing to do if the Asian media were to cut through the underbrush of popular myths was to stand on their own.

"All of us are the products of western media. Our minds have been, subliminally and otherwise, shaped by "The Economist" and "The New York Times", by CNN and Mickey Mouse," he said.

He added that thus it was important to come to terms with this ground reality before they could discuss any aspect of the media in Asia more meaningfully.

George also stressed the need for the Asian media to stand up to western bullying.

"Malaysian Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has consistently and very boldly stood up to bullying but he is a solitary exception.

"In this aggressive age, exceptions will not do and we need an Asia that can say no but unfortunately the media in Asia seems unable to play a leadership role in this area," he said. -- BERNAMA

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