

22 OCT 1996
Mahathir-censor
GUIDELINE FOR BETTER TV CENSORSHIP

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 22 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the government must provide the guideline to local television and radio stations to ensure proper censorship of programmes broadcast by them.

He said the government would also prepare the conditions for recruiting qualified censorship officers and staff to carry out the function.

"The stations require officers and staff who are matured, widely experienced and understand the sensitivity of every religion and who can differentiate between good and bad materials," he told reporters after opening the TV3 Operation Centre, Sri Pentas, at Bandar Utama here.

He said in-house censorship must also be sensitive to government efforts in developing the country and moulding national identity.

Dr Mahathir stressed that the censors must not be too liberal in accepting foreign elements which had adverse effects on the local population.

Dr Mahathir said although the censorship carried out by local TV and radio stations now met with government requirements, there were occasions when they were insensitive to the problems faced by the government in curbing social problems prevailing in the country.

He cited an incident recently when a private TV station "escaped and lacked wisdom" in choosing the right programme for broadcast.

"Recently, while we discourage illegal motorcycle racing there were people who glorified such races as were being done abroad," he said.

The Prime Minister said the information explosion and rapid development in communication technology resulted in the existing machinery for censorship becoming inadequate to handle the thousands of broadcast material received.

"They (the regulations and censorship machinery) were effective during the era of the official film censors which had only about 40 titles to go through a year but now it is difficult to censor thousands of titles produced a day. We find that TV programmes are broadcast in real time, in such a case it is difficult to censor," he added.

He said the government is more keen on the TV programme broadcast on time interval to give time to censorship staff to censor the material for broadcast.

On the application for additional channel and 24 hour broadcast by TV3, the Prime Minister said: "Under consideration. We consider all applications, the approval is not certain."

In his speech, TV3 managing director, Zahari Omar appealed to the government to allow existing free terrestrial TV stations which had proven excellent track record to run more than one channel.

He said with the additional channel and extended broadcast time, the need for local programmes could be increased and at the same time local programme producers would have better opportunities.

Dr Mahathir was proud with the achievement by TV3 which had quickly mastered sophisticated state of the art systems in line with the bright future for the industry.

"I did not expect such big and sophisticated facilities to be available at TV3. I have also seen facilities owned by other stations and I find that the facilities available here are comparable with those owned by other stations," he added.

Dr Mahathir also suggested that local TV stations have exchange programmes for documentaries with foreign TV stations so that the outside world would have a deeper understanding of our way of life and culture.

He said he had discussed the matter frequently with foreign leaders whenever he went on overseas visits.

The Prime Minister's wife, Datuk Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohamad Ali who accompanied him during the visit to Sri Pentas, became a guest for the programme, "Nona".

Also present during the visit were Information Minister Datuk Mohamad Rahmat and chairman of Sistem Televisyen Malaysia Berhad, Datuk Mohd Noor Yusof.

Earlier, Dr Mahathir had a video conference with four general managers of TV3 subsidiary companies on developments within their companies. --

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