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Media can help educate youths on life's values

KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. - The media can influence youths negatively, especially on their values and way of life, but it also helps in their intellectual and social development.

International Centre for Media Studies fellow Samsudin A. Rahim in his working paper, *Media and the Social Construct: Implications Towards Social Issues on the Youths*, said society should find ways to use the media's influence positively.

He was presenting a paper at the ICMS round table conference on media transparency and social issues among the youths.

"We need to use strategy to create a programme and media news in a planned and integrated manner to deal with issues involving the youths," he said.

He suggested infotainment and edutainment programmes that combine education and entertainment as youths would not pay attention to purely informational shows.

Among others, the media could encourage family oriented values and create an appropriate role model for youths, he said.

In his paper entitled *The Coverage of Social Issues in the Media*, Berita Harian assistant editor Mior Kamarul Shahid said the media should be looked at in the context of its basic responsibility in providing information, guiding society, public service and entertainment.

The media has never had a specific definition of social problems, he said holding on to its function to relay information to entertain, be a watchdog and educate.

"The media does not consider social issues as a new topic, but rather a continuous one.

"The definition of social problems is very large as anything that is reported can be linked to social problems," he said.

Mior also said the local media in reporting social issues focused on items that could be considered educational and not one that encouraged a particular social behaviour.

Meanwhile Deputy Information Minister Datuk Suleiman Mohamad said Malaysians must have the "inner strength" to censor negative issues which they come across in the media.

He said there was no way for the Government to curtail freedom of the press if it wanted to create an informed society and so it was up to the people themselves to recognise and censor the negative influences.

"Although the Ministry has an 'open sky' policy, it is still somewhat limited but with the Cable News Network and other foreign shows shown directly to the audience, there is no way for news to be censored," he said.

About 60 participants representing government agencies, the media, academicians, non-Governmental organisations and members of religious bodies attended the conference.

Sulaiman said the ICMS through its "Think Project", a media literacy programme, was working towards creating the inner strength in a person through values, religion, morals and culture.

Earlier, in Information Minister Datuk Mohamed Rahmat's speech, which Suleiman read, he said members of the mass media had the power or influence to decide the contents of what was to be printed or shown.

"I think the media should follow the principle of responsibility that

comes with their role, such as being responsible for the articles they present to the public," he said.

Mohamed reminded the conference participants on Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's comments for members of the media to be accurate in their reporting.

"Sensational news will attract the reader but it will also bring about negative effects," he said referring to the inaccurate reporting by the Western media which had caused a tension in relations with Britain.

Suleiman later launched the ICMS Monograph series which started off with volume one entitled "Satellite Television in Malaysia".

ICMS is a non-profit organisation.

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