

20/07/1998

Bahasa publications lack ad support

Lokman Mansor

NEWSPAPERS and magazines using Bahasa Malaysia, although commanding among the widest circulation nationwide, are not getting the commensurate advertising support, according to Utusan Melayu (Malaysia) Bhd executive chairman Tan Sri Kamarul Ariffin.

He said if one were to follow logic, newspapers and magazines read by more readers should also get more support from advertisers.

"But it looks like there is still some prejudice among some advertisers towards newspapers and magazines in Bahasa. We will continue to try and convince them that it is their loss," Kamarul said.

He was speaking at the opening of Utusan's new printing plant, Sri Utusan, in Bangi on Saturday. The plant was officially opened by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

During the press conference, the Prime Minister said there are two ways to get more advertising for newspapers and magazines published in Bahasa Malaysia.

"The first is, of course, to urge the advertisers to do so. Another and much better approach is to make the readers of these newspapers and magazines themselves more affluent, more educated," Dr Mahathir said.

He said the Government hopes that newspapers and magazines will continue to help improve the standard of living of Malaysians, particularly Malays. Once this is done, advertisers will naturally want to target this group of consumers.

The Sri Utusan printing complex, costing more than RM110 million, is situated on an area measuring 18,832 sq m and is equipped with the Geoman printing press capable of printing up to 70,000 copies per hour.

Through a remote printing system, the machine is also capable of receiving full pagination from Utusan's editorial department, still operating at Jalan Chan Sow Lin, for the printing of its newspapers, and from Paris for the printing of the International Herald Tribune.

The plant is also equipped with a RM16 million Muller Martini conveyer system which enables the on-line insertion of supplements and flyers into newspapers.

The opening of the printing plant is among the various programmes planned in conjunction with Utusan's 60th anniversary celebration.

Apart from Utusan's core business in publishing and printing, the company is also active in the field of multimedia, CD ROM production, outdoor advertising, radio and print advertising, audio-visual production, the manufacture of stationary, insurance, events management, transportation and other printing related activities such as commercial printing, binding services, and security printing.

Meanwhile, asked about the resignation last week of Utusan Editor-in-Chief Datuk Johan Jaafar, Dr Mahathir said his resignation was not due to political pressure as suggested by foreign media reports.

This was supported by Kamarul, who later told reporters that Utusan's board of directors will meet on Tuesday to deliberate on Johan's resignation and the possible appointment his successor.

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