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Positive role of press in LID

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THE direct participation of the press in the fourth Langkawi International Dialogue (LID) sessions allowed ideas and suggestions to flow freely between Government leaders and media representatives.

Both sides were able to air concerns while gaining invaluable insights into issues that are of significance not only to the participants but also the rest of the world.

One major concern of the media was that LID might just be a forum where ideas, and good ones at that, are raised but are then left to fizzle out.

It was at such a session yesterday that Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad announced the release of the Langkawi Message, a documentation of what transpired at this year's LID and the recommendations agreed upon.

Group editor of New Straits Times Press (M) Bhd (NST) Ahmad A. Talib suggested that the youth be invited to participate in the next dialogue so that they could benefit from the discussions among different nations.

Datuk Seri Dr Siti Hasmah, Dr Mahathir's wife, asked what the media thought about the participation for the first time of the First Ladies in their own dialogue at LID.

NST Editor-at-large Hardev Kaur responded by saying that as long as issues discussed were important and pertinent, the media would not have a problem providing positive coverage for the First Ladies' dialogue.

"I found that the discussions were cogent and relevant to the themes of the LID discussions. I think that you will find more positive coverage if this continues," Hardev said.

NST Editor-in-chief Datuk Abdul Kadir Jasin asked Dr Mahathir whether he was happy with the current format of the dialogue. Kadir also suggested that perhaps LID could consider the participation of European nations as well in future.

"I am never happy with the current state of affairs. We should always strive for an ever increasing state of achievement. However, the present arrangement for LID is working quite well. We are able to prise open a lot of things which were not exposed before," Dr Mahathir said.

On the inclusion of developed countries, he said LID is not ready, while noting that rich nations have the tendency to order others around instead of listening and comparing ideas.

"So we want to confine the dialogue to the Third World at the moment."

Dr Mahathir also said that he was not against the foreign media as they do sometimes report the truth, for instance the brutality perpetrated by the Serbs in Bosnia.

"I am not against the media all the way. We are also thankful to the information on the cruelties in Bosnia which CNN reported extensively.

"But I do criticise them when I feel they are not reporting the truth," he said.

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