

12/06/1999

Successful CPU meetings brought about better networking

Saiful Azhar Abdullah in London

THE glorious success of the "Eye of the Tiger" Conference in Kuala Lumpur and the Editors' Forum in Penang organised by the Commonwealth Press Union last year dominated discussions at the 89th annual general meeting of the CPU.

Those who attended the meeting, held at the Royal Commonwealth Society building in Northumberland Avenue, especially CPU president Lyle Turnbull and executive director Mark Robinson attributed the CPU's success last year to the outstanding success of the forum and conference.

"The success of the forum and conference marked a good and successful year for the CPU," said Robinson, praising the host for providing the 63 participating editors excellent facilities for the two events.

He said there were concerns earlier of problems in Malaysia especially when the forum and conference were held at a time the country was facing difficult economic and political situations.

Robinson said when he flew into Kuala Lumpur, the city was experiencing haze problems apart from demonstrations as a result of the dismissal and arrest of former Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

Despite the problems, he said, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad opened the conference although many of the participants were sceptical of his presence.

Robinson said the Prime Minister was very gracious and everybody was delighted that he was willing to accept questions from the floor including on issues on Anwar.

"After the opening ceremony, a member of the Malaysian Press asked the Prime Minister what he thought about the participants' questions on Anwar.

"And the Prime Minister replied: "If they didn't ask, they wouldn't be good editors, would they?"

Robinson said the CPU was delighted with the outcome of the forum and conference.

The two events had established a form of networking among the editors. One of the successes was the establishment of a bulletin board by Le Mauricien editor Gilbert Ahnee which brought news highlighting issues of Press freedom that emerged around the globe.

And Turnbull also echoed Robinson's view of the success of the two events.

"The forum was the most important event for CPU and it has contributed towards the establishment of contacts between the editors," he added.

On training, Robinson said the Editors' Forum had become a central focus of CPU training activities and CPU was planning for expansion of the activities.

He said the CPU would review its work to strive for greater achievement in its training programme.

On the financial side, the Commonwealth Press Union Conferences Limited managed to eliminate CPU's accumulated losses brought forward from last year which related to the start-up costs of both events.

This was due to the excellent level of support given to the conference in Kuala Lumpur and the forum in Penang.

(END)