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Readers against restrictions on Astro, tell naysayers to go watch other channels

KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. - New Straits Times readers criticised a politician's call for fewer foreign shows on pay television station Astro in the newspaper's e-media website today.

The NST on March 9 carried an article on Dewan Rakyat backbencher Ahmad Zahid Hamidi's comment that there was a need to curb the number of foreign programmes on Astro as, he claimed, most of them lacked values.

One reader, Ting, questioned the backbencher's definition of "values".

"I am not quite sure what is meant by the proponent of the issue when it was said that foreign films lacked the values (Malaysian values?) as foreign films do not have Malaysian values unless by co-incidence.

"As we enter the era of information technology, many cultural values between countries have been integrated. To say that television stations airing foreign films without local values need Government control is a very weak reason," said Ting.

Ting went on to say that Malaysians could learn about other cultures through such films.

"Anyway, if a person does not like to watch the programmes aired on Astro, then why not just click to TV3? We have plenty of shows depicting local values on other channels," wrote Ting.

Eddie Yeah Cheng Teik defended Astro arguing that muzzling the television station would go against the aim of our country becoming a knowledge-rich nation.

"Astro came into being for a purpose with a mission that was clearly spelled out before our Government put its stamp of approval. I am sure that the station is guided by a set of disciplines that has to be strictly adhered to," he said.

He said that Astro subscribers were educated and intelligent enough to be able to determine the values involved for themselves.

Another reader, How Kim Chai was more vocal in lambasting the backbencher's statement.

"People who call for fewer foreign shows should go live inside the jungle and isolate themselves from the real world. If you surf the Internet, you will come across websites that will do more harm than Astro.

"Maybe these people are just jealous of the high quality of these foreign programmes that may be difficult for them to watch," said How.

Readers were also in full support of Palmini G.'s Letter of the Day on March 8 which claimed that young children were being deprived of their childhood.

Salina wrote that children should be allowed to be children and enjoy their childhood.

"I have two daughters attending kindergarten now. I want them to learn the alphabet, numerals and social skills in school without being burdened with too much homework. Let them enjoy themselves with their friends," she said.

Another reader, S. Radhakrishnan felt that the general attitude of adults towards the education of the young needed a second look.

"We should allow our children to grow naturally and we should enjoy watching them grow up and develop their own view of the world. Our job is to guide them, not to rob them of their precious growing up years," he wrote.

Another Letter of the Day dated March 7, however, did not meet with the same response from readers.

The article by S. Parameswaran welcomed the call by Malaysian AIDS Council president Datin Paduka Marina Mahathir that sex education should be introduced in schools to combat AIDS among youth.

"Concerned Parent" disagreed with the writer and Marina, saying religion is a more important subject to be taught in schools and at home.

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