

17/04/2001

Women journalists 'under-represented at top, middle management levels'

KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. - Women journalists are still under-represented at the top and middle management levels in the print media sector, National Unity and Social Development Minister Datuk Dr Siti Zaharah Sulaiman said today.

She said while more than 47 per cent of women journalists were qualified academically, the number holding critical and important positions was not encouraging.

"Women journalists should be equipped with skills and knowledge in management, including organising a workforce, so that they can get past gender constraints," she said, after opening the "Enhancing the Leadership and Management Skills of Women Journalists" workshop at Crown Princess Hotel.

Women constituted 40 per cent of the workforce in the newspaper industry, which was a huge achievement, she added.

Earlier, Siti Zaharah said the key to the advancement of women's position in society would be their active participation and decision-making in all development sectors.

She said women journalists could help women realise that only when they participated in the whole process of planning, decision-making and resource allocation, could they shape their social environment and destinies.

Siti Zaharah said Malaysia was considered more developed among developing nations, and women here could claim a substantial share in the current economic development.

This, she added, was made possible by their unhindered access to education, helped by a rapidly growing economy, and the commendable efforts made by the Government and non-governmental organisations, under the strong leadership of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad to promote quality through gender sensitive programmes.

Siti Zaharah also commended the Asian Institute for Development Communication (Aidcom) for organising the training workshop to provide women with the appropriate skills required for more senior management positions in their organisations.

The three-day training workshop, which started today, is organised by Aidcom, in collaboration with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (Unesco).

The workshop aims to address the major issues on women's rights and equality in journalism and to enhance the leadership and management skills of women journalists.

The workshop - the first of its kind in Malaysia - is part of the final phase of a Unesco funded project, "Negotiating the Maze: Changing the Status Quo of Women Journalists in Malaysia".

Also present at the event were Aidcom chairman and the New Straits Times editorial adviser Datuk Mazlan Nordin and group chief editor of Star Publications Datuk Ng Poh Tip.

Some 40 participants from various local media organisations participated in the workshop.

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