

22/08/2001

PM: SNNi must be a credible news source

PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad wants the Smart News Network International to emerge as a credible news source.

Speaking after his address at the Global 2001 Smart Partnership International Dialogue on Monday night at Speke Resort Monyonyo, he cautioned that "while we should try and promote the countries, we should also be credible... if we start painting a glowing picture about different countries which are not factual, people are not going to read.

"So I do hope that you will be very selective. As (Ugandan President Yoweri Kaguta) Museveni said divide the paper into two... give the good and bad news and it is now up to the journalists to break the monopoly of the international media.

"Because you know very well and the Malaysian Press must agree that what is reported (by international media) about is not factual... so what is reported about Africa is also not factual."

Dr Mahathir said SNNi has an opportunity "to give the true picture and stick to the true picture.

"Don't write something that is so uncritical as to be disregarded," he added.

He said the setting up of the SNNi was a very "wonderful tangible thing from the dialogue".

Dr Mahathir said the Press, both the African and foreign, did not give positive reports about their own countries.

"Of course, (they do) the same thing about Malaysia... but Malaysia has some advantages and is able to attract investments and people.

"For instance Uganda is very beautiful and this needs to be exposed. With the SNNi, you should be able to exchange the news between the countries, news that originate from the countries themselves," he added.

The news network was launched on Monday night, jointly by Dr Mahathir, Museveni and President Joaquim Alberto Chissano of Mozambique.

The formation of the SNNi came into reality a day earlier Museveni, Dr Mahathir and Chissano, on behalf of smart partners, subscribed the Munyonyo-Kampala Declaration on Media.

The establishment of SNNi is seen as one of the concrete achievements made in the dialogue since 1995 when the first Langkawi International Dialogue was held in Langkawi.

Eleven news agencies and newspapers have participated by contributing articles to the network via its website <http://www.snni.org/>.

They are Daily News of Botswana, Mozambique News Agency of Mozambique, Namibia Today of Namibia, Buanews of South Africa, New Vision of Uganda, The Herald of Zimbabwe, Seychelles Nation of Seychelles, and Bernama, New Straits Times, Star and Utusan Malaysia of Malaysia.

Under the arrangement, participating media organisations would contribute on a daily basis via the website - news, features, photographs and video images. The server of the website is located in Kuala Lumpur.

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