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LID-Media (Wrap-up)

NEED FOR MEDIA IN THE SOUTH TO BUILD GREATER TRUST

By: Ahmad Fuad Yahya

LANGKAWI, Aug 4 (Bernama) -- The question of trust and mistrust among media practitioners in the South raised by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad at the Global 2002 Langkawi International Dialogue (LID) certainly deserves serious attention in the context of smart partnership.

To a certain extent, it may reflect their own practice of biased and inaccurate reporting, prompting them to have some reservations on the news churned out by their counterparts.

They may have their own reasons for not using the news provided under the news exchange link-ups such as the Smart News Network International (SNNi).

SNNi, conceived at the Langkawi International Dialogue in 2000, was launched during the Southern Africa International Dialogue in Kampala, Uganda last year.

Bernama is the secretariat for the news exchange between African and Malaysian media organisations.

SNNi is participated by eight countries, namely Mozambique, Lesotho, South Africa, Uganda, Zimbabwe, Botswana, Namibia and Malaysia.

The media in the South, however, seems more inclined to use news channelled by foreign wire agencies, which a local newspaper editor said was "faster and convenient" for the dailies to pick up.

But the big question is how reliable the news filed by such agencies with regard to truth and accuracy.

In most cases, these news were often sensationalised with a negative slant and have certain hidden agenda against the government or the leader in power.

On the question of negative reporting by the media, Robert Kabushenga, corporation secretary of New Vision, Uganda's leading newspaper, explained that the media placed emphasis on things perceived to be negative but these negative news were written with hope that the authorities would address the issues raised.

At the same time, the media had also been publishing positive news but more than often they turned out to be less noticeable by the readers than the negative ones.

Kabushenga also made an interesting proposal that SNNi be expanded into international TV and radio news networks to help counter the distortions fabricated by the Western media.

SNNi members could feed the news content from their respective countries to be aired to the international audience, he said.

Malaysia, he said, could facilitate the establishment of these channels because it had adequate technical and communication facilities to convert the SNNi from its present form into an international media house with an almost global reach.

Malaysia's two satellites should be made full use of for the purpose, he said.

Currently, news contributed by members of the SNNi network are posted on a website. Members are free to download the news and use them for publication.

In this regard, Bernama, now the secretariat for SNNi, had expressed its preparedness to assume a bigger role as far as overseas coverage is concerned, including audio visual services.

It plans to open more overseas bureaux from next year, including one in

West Asia.

Bernama editor-in-chief Jaafar Hussin said the news agency would seek additional funding from the government to enable it to transmit news and visuals with better equipment and facilities.

He also said Bernama was waiting for an appropriate time to undertake direct transmission of news to targeted overseas audience.

Another positive development at the Global 2002 LID was the interest shown by the Commonwealth of Independent States, Seychelles, Mauritius and Ghana to join SNNi.

While welcoming additional membership to SNNi, the media of the South also needed to increase the usage of news channelled through the news network as an alternative news source.

The ability to "get the stories out" either in print or via the air waves from the South will certainly provide a tremendous impact to the role of the media of the South in terms of their smart partnering in imparting information, knowledge and experiences to help in nation-building.

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