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ZAM: MUSLIM STATES MUST COOPERATE IN PROMOTING NEWS EXCHANGE

KUALA LUMPUR, March 10 (Bernama) -- Muslim countries must close ranks and work together in promoting and exchanging news and information where Muslims' perspective would be emphasised, Deputy Information Minister Datuk Zainuddin Maidin said today.

He said actions should be taken to reinvigorate the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC)-specialised information institutions, namely the Islamic States Broadcasting Organisation (ISBO), the International Islamic News Agency (IINA) and the Islamic Programme for the Development of Information and Communication (PIDIC) so that they could be on par with their regional and international counterparts.

Speaking at the Sixth OIC Information Ministers Meeting in Cairo, Zainuddin said the advent of information and communications technology (ICT) had resulted in a free flow of news items, many of which were western-oriented and biased reports aimed at distorting information, especially about Muslim states.

The text of his speech was made available to Bernama here.

Zainudin said in the wake of globalisation, where free flow of information has resulted in countries having access to all kinds of information, Malaysia had taken the initiative to promote the setting up of news and TV exchange programmes among the South fraternity.

He said the initiative was basically to promote the best interests of countries of the South by giving emphasis on their perspective.

To spearhead the initiative, he said, Malaysia had proposed to set up a media centre, to be known as the South-South Information Gateway (SSIG), which would act as a depository for all news and TV programmes.

The South-South news and information programme was first mooted during the Langkawi International Dialogue in 1999 by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who stressed the importance of smart partnership, mutual prosperity and equal sharing among the South countries.

"It is hoped that with exchange of news materials and programmes among the the South-South countries, we would be able to counter the erroneous views and opinions as well as the negative perceptions of the western media and in return will be able to transmit news and information directly to our clients.

"It is hoped that SSIG will complement the good work done by ISBO, IINA and PIDIC and other institutions of the OIC," said Zainuddin.

In welcoming all OIC member countries to participate in the proposed SSIG, he said it was through such joint efforts that the Muslim world could project the true and positive image of Islam.

"We have to be united in our cause in order to counter the negative aspects portrayed by the western media. All these can be achieved if we can make full use of the satellite facilities all over the world.

"There is a need for every member country to harness greater use of the ICT in disseminating news and information about Islam," he said.

The Malaysian delegation to the two-day meeting, which was opened by Egyptian Prime Minister Atef Ebeid, includes Information Ministry Secretary-General Datuk Dr Arshad Hashim, RTM Director-General Datuk Alimusa Sulaiman and Bernama General Manager Syed Jamil Jaafar.

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