

Stories on MH370 go missing on ABN, HyppTV

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HyppTV will not air Al Jazeera's 101 East programme of the MH370 anniversary and ABN News censored a section of the repeat programme at 5.30pm this evening.

Two more repeats are scheduled for 11.30am tomorrow and on Monday at 12.30am.

Telekom Malaysia-owned HyppTV took Aljazeera 101 East's show MH370 off the air during its first broadcast this morning at 6.30am.

This follows a directive by the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC) to remove any sensitivities that may be misconstrued by Malaysians, relatives and next of kin of MH370 victims.

Apparently HyppTV decided not to air as MCMC has yet to give the clearance. In the slot at 6.30am, it repeated Aljazeera's English news during the scheduled 101 East programme.

Hypp TV is currently waiting for MCMC's clearance before it decides to air the repeats of the programme.

International TV networks view MCMC's directive as imposition of strict controls on broadcasters who will be airing stories to mark the anniversary of the missing MH370, an action which some say is tantamount to censoring of the media.

However, MCMC does not see it as a directive and prefers to use the word advisory.

It's senior director and head of strategic communications Sheikh Raffie Abd Rahman said, "We issue advisories as a caring gesture to protect the sensitivities of the next of kin of MH370 victims.

"From time to time, we will issue such advisories. For example, we also issued one on the observation of a one-minute silence concerning MH370.

"This is also part of our continuous engagement with the broadcasters, so that we respect and are all aware of the sensitivities in relation to the next of kin of passengers and crew of MH370," Sheikh Raffie told Malaysiakini.

Special panel to vet contents

It is learnt that a special committee to vet contents of all proposed stories before they are broadcast has been set up in MCMC.

Astro has asked all news channels in its network to provide details of the angle of the story

and those being interviewed on the show.

A hint of this control came when National Geographic announced that it would not be airing its MH370 show as scheduled on March 8. While it did not give any reason for this move, it is understood that Astro had wanted certain segments clipped.

“National Geographic did not want its standards compromised, thus it will not be on Astro,” said the source.

A former Aljazeera journalist said the network has never compromised in the past by providing a copy for preview as it is against its journalistic ethics and principles. “However, I am not sure if it will give in this time around.”

He said they had been warned before of being virtually blacked out by having a black screen instead of the episode, adding that he did not know what the fuss was about when everything is in the social media these days.

“Even if they are blacked out, the show will be on YouTube and the channels’ webpages for the world to see. So what is the fuss? In fact, more people will watch online if they are banned on Astro. Silly move, I would say,” he said, adding that the network had officially protested against such censorship in the past.

A spokesperson for Aljazeera declined comment, saying that they would see if their broadcast was aired later today.

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