

## **Don't hit below the belt, Zahid tells alternative media**

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Deputy Prime Minister Ahmad Zahid Hamidi wants non-mainstream media reporters not to ruin the country and to be ethical in their news writing.

He wants the alternative media - including portals - to follow the example of the mainstream media, which he said is ethical and balanced in their views and news approach.

"I hope the journalists from the non-mainstream media realise that their freedom should not be used to ruin the country.

"Even if the medium is different, you should not defame or bring someone down. Don't cross the line or hit below the belt.

"They (non-mainstream media) should learn from the mainstream media that even though they have different opinions, they don't defame others," Zahid told the audience at the Malaysian Press Institute's Tokoh Kewartawanan Negara Awards in Kuala Lumpur today.

Zahid also condemned the the non-mainstream media, including blogs, portals and others, for "practising the culture of trial by the media", which he said was unethical and breached the law.

He said journalists needed to be wise and realise there is no absolute freedom of media in the world.

"Wise journalists know how to move within the ambit of law as they understand that there is no absolute freedom anywhere in the world. Even in the most independent Western countries, they practise self-censorship.

"Remember that the pen is mightier than the sword and pens controlled by irresponsible individuals can kill and destroy a country," he said.

### **Those who do not consider sensitivities of the country**

Without naming anybody, Zahid said certain individuals who were given voice in the non-mainstream media did not consider the sensitivities of the country and had shamed and hurt other individuals and publications.

He said the said media had also been unfair by only highlighting the individual's voice and silenced opposing views, while burying criticisms directed at them.

"But when others criticise their media in writing, this is erased, removed and pushed aside. If someone can criticise others, they should be able to accept criticisms themselves.

"They should accept criticism with wisdom, so that ethical and harmonious values can be accepted and practised.

"This is the view from the very bottom of my heart. We have to be responsible for what we write and be prepared to be criticised and embarrassed," Zahid said.

In the event, two veteran journalists were named as the new 'Tokoh Wartawan Negara' - former Bernama and New Straits Times editor Ahmad Reejal Arbee and former consultant editor of theSun, the late Zainon Ahmad (photo).

Other former recipients of the award present at the event today were Zainuddin Maidin and A Kadir Jasin, both of whom are now critics of the present government administration.

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