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# PM: Fair and responsible media crucial for future



Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak admiring the Kajai Award prize won by Jalal Ali Mohd Abdul Rahim of 'Berita Harian'. With them are award winners Elizabeth Lisa John and Imran Makzan.

KUALA LUMPUR: A free, vibrant and informed media empowered to report without fear of consequence and holding governments and public officials accountable.

This is the kind of media that Datuk Seri Najib Razak would like to see emerging "if we are truly to build a democracy that is responsive to the needs of all the people".

The prime minister said he wanted debate and dialogue to continue in the media which was why he lifted the ban on *Harakah* and *Suara Keadilan*, the official organs of Pas and Parti Keadilan Rakyat.

"We need world-class, fact-based reporting. The media must be fair and responsible in your reporting. It is crucial if we are to foster a constructive debate about our nation's future," he said at the MPI-Petronas Malaysian Journalism Awards 2008/Malaysian Media Nite 2009 yesterday.

Najib said that when he talked about responsible reporting, he did not mean the responsibility to take the side of the government.

"Indeed, to me, responsible reporting means looking more sceptically and critically at some of the claims from all sides and rumours which make up too great a part of our political discourse."

The prime minister acknowledged the power of the media, both print and broadcast, which could lend credibility to stories and rumours that are filtered from the grassroots and the Internet.

"The media best serves the public interest when it goes beyond the superficial: when it asks the tough questions of the rumour-mongers; when it does not lend credence to false innuendo, and instead reports on facts and details — whether that is helpful to the government or not."

Personal attacks, Najib said, had undermined public confidence in the political process and did nothing to bring the nation closer to achieving its goals.

"I've endured my fair share of these from some quarters of the media. I will always stand up and be accountable for the decisions I make as your prime minister."

Najib said he also knew that personal slurs and false accusations levelled against national leaders could be deeply damaging to the nation's political discourse and international reputation.

The prime minister urged everyone who wanted to engage in debate and discourse about the nation's future to do so amicably.

"Colourful reporting should be consigned to history. It too often presents a world that bears no resemblance to reality and only serves to damage the public discourse we truly need.

"A vibrant political and public dialogue is the best way forward for our country: the times demand it and the people expect it. Let us not fail them."

Meanwhile, half the awards presented yesterday were won by the Media Prima Group.

Jalal Ali Mohd Abdul Rahim of *Berita Harian* won the top Kajai Award. He received RM24,000, a gold medal and a certificate.

Former *New Sunday Times* journalist Elizabeth Lisa John won the Best Environment Re-

porting award. She and the winners in other categories took home RM11,000 and certificates.

The other Media Prima Group winners are: Imran Makzan of *Berita Harian* (Best Photo Journalism), Wong Ngee Hoong of ntv7 (Best Video Documentary) and Puspavathy Ramaloo and Mohd Jufri Mohd Judin of TV3 (best video).

Winners in other categories are: Azizul Falimi Ahmad Zabidi of *Kosmo* (A. Samad Ismail Young Journalist Award), Salawati Harris of MMP Communications (Best General Reporting), Azman Ibrahim, Azran Fitri Abdul Rahim, Sopi Samaile, Mohd Shariza Abdullah, Au Yeong How and Mohd Nazrul Azim Sharuddin of *Utusan Melayu* (Best News Reporting), *Malay Mail* Team (Best Investigative Reporting), Chin Mui Yoon of *The Star* (Best International Reporting), Noraini Abd Razak of *Utusan Melayu* (Best Feature Story) and Lim Sue Goan of *Sin Chew Daily* (Best Commentary/Column/Critical Analysis).