

**By : DATO' SRI MOHD NAJIB BIN TUN HAJI ABDUL RAZAK  
PERDANA MENTERI MALAYSIA**

**Venue : JW MARRIOTT HOTEL, KUALA LUMPUR**

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**Title : NATIONAL PRESS CLUB - NAZA AWARDS 2011**

Ladies and Gentlemen, good evening.

1. It is a great honour to be asked to present this year's National Press Club Awards – an opportunity for us to come together and celebrate the remarkable contribution of the writers and editors who do so much to make the Malaysian media the informative and vibrant industry it is.
2. I had the pleasure of speaking at the very first NPC awards last year, and afterwards I went home hoping it would become an annual fixture so I'm delighted that you asked me to return tonight!
3. I want to thank the sponsors – Naxa, Scomi, Celcom, TM, Ambank, Sime Darby, UEM and Maxis – for their generosity; “Dato Rocky” for his excellent speech; and SM Nasarudin SM Nasimuddin for his opening remarks. I'm sure everyone here will agree with me that there's no sight greater than a son following in his father's professional footsteps!
4. My congratulations too to Mokhtar Hussein, who just a few days ago was elected as the NPC's new president. I'm told that the election was carried out in a most “bersih” fashion, so hopefully we'll hear no complaints from the runners-up!
5. But above all, thanks and congratulations must go to you, the people who make the Malaysian media what it is. I will only be handing awards to a few of you this evening, but I know that there were no easy decisions for the judges this year. If we were to give an award to everyone who deserved one, I'd still be here tomorrow morning – and that would be far longer than any politician wants to spend in a room full of reporters!
6. Many years ago there was an encounter between an up-and-coming politician and an experienced old reporter from his local paper. After a meeting one evening the politician confronted the journalist and accused him of always distorting and twisting what he said, of taking his words out of context. The newsman objected, and said that he always reported accurately, although obviously he sometimes had to tidy things up a little for the sake of clarity so that his readers would understand what the politician was actually saying.
7. But the politician wasn't happy, and continued to complain. “Why can't you just report exactly what I say?” he asked, angrily. “Why can't you just report EVERYTHING that happens in the meeting?”
8. At the following week's meeting the reporter dutifully recorded every single word and, instead of writing a news story, he filled a page with a complete transcript of everything that had been said.

9. And by that I mean every cough, every hiccup, every splutter. Every meandering sentence that went nowhere. Every time the politician had tripped over his words and had to start again, and every remark that made him seem inelegant, ill-educated and generally unfit for public office!

10. And of course the next morning the politician went back to the reporter and said “Why did you have to report EVERYTHING that happened in that meeting?”

11. So complaints about media accuracy are nothing new. But developments in technology mean that the balance between getting it first and getting it right, a tension that has long existed in journalism, is increasingly shifting towards speed over veracity.

12. In the past the logistics of newspaper production and distribution gave reporters time to think carefully and be sure of their argument before putting pen to paper. Today, with millions of Malaysians using Twitter, it is possible for news to spread from Perlis to Pontian in little more time than it takes to type 140 characters into an iPhone or a BlackBerry.

13. And in an age where truth is defined by the latest edits to Wikipedia an inaccurate story can rapidly take root, its influence living on in the darker corners of cyberspace long after the facts have come to light.

14. The internet offers incredible opportunities for communication and information-sharing, but accuracy must always be the guiding light of the true journalist. Because while the internet makes it easier than ever to get a story out first, it also makes it easier than ever for your readers to know if you haven't got it right.

15. It allows them to rapidly check facts, analyse claims and decide for themselves about the truth of the matter. And once your readers decide that your reporting is not accurate and cannot be trusted, you will find that they very quickly cease to be your readers at all!

16. After all, when Rudyard Kipling read a newspaper report of his own death he immediately marched to his typewriter and fired off a letter to the editor: “I have just read that I am dead. Don't forget to delete me from your list of subscribers.”

17. So perhaps it's no surprise that not everyone is as fond of the media as we are. Tony Blair said the media resembled “a pack of feral beasts.” Mahatma Gandhi said that he believed in equality for everyone – except reporters and photographers. And a survey last year found that journalists were among the least-respected and least-trusted people in Europe - I'm sure you'll be as shocked as I was to learn that politicians were held in even lower regard!

18. But here in Malaysia things are, thankfully, very different. Our media is sensitive and considerate. Famous figures do not have the paparazzi on their tails, in their backyards and at their bedroom windows.

19. The world's media can learn some lessons from Malaysia's journalists. You publish news that matters, not gossip about celebrity sex scandals. You understand how to uncover a story through hard-nosed journalistic endeavour rather than by rooting through dustbins and tapping private telephone calls. And while you're never afraid to criticise where criticism is

deserved, you don't abuse your positions to launch personal vendettas against those with whom you disagree.

20. When I travel overseas and speak to foreign audiences I often tell them about how Malaysia has been so successful because of our diversity rather than in spite of it, and for that much credit must go to the media. Your ability to cover sensitive issues in a careful and balanced way shows a huge degree of social responsibility and is a tribute to your professionalism.

21. Burton Rascoe, a great newspaper editor of the early 20th century, said that "news sense is really a sense of what is important, what is vital, what has colour and life."

22. You bring the colour and life of this country to the people of Malaysia, you ensure that everyone understands the issues that matter, and we are here tonight to recognise that.

Thank you.