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MPI chief: AI transforms journalism, but ethics must guide the future

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KUALA LUMPUR: Artificial Intelligence (AI) has entered the newsroom, transforming how journalists work while raising serious questions about ethics, accuracy, and trust.

According to Malaysian Press Institute (MPI) president Datuk Yong Soo Heong, these have been the ethical crossroads confronting today's media landscape.

"Falsehoods are costly. Journalistic integrity demands rigorous fact-checking and transparency. Trust is a journalist's currency, and those who mislead readers will inevitably face serious repercussions," he told Bernama recently.

Yong acknowledged the undeniable benefits of AI in boosting newsroom productivity, but stressed that the core values of journalism, namely truth, accountability and human judgement, must never be compromised.

He also expressed concerns over the increasing reliance on AI-generated content and the alarming rise of deepfakes, warning that, if left unchecked, these trends could severely erode public trust in the media.

Yong noted that AI had transformed newsroom operations, enabling faster editing, personalised content delivery, and more efficient workflows, especially among younger journalists who preferred AI-generated summaries over traditional face-to-face interviews.

East Coast media practitioners are pictured during a training session in Kuala Terengganu yesterday, meant to deepen their knowledge of AI technology. — Bernama photo

"Context, tone, and human expression are irreplaceable. Only direct engagement captures the nuances that make a story resonate," he emphasised.

He warned that AI-generated visuals had become a new frontier of misinformation, citing several recent incidents in Malaysia and the region involving misleading or doctored imagery.

These developments, Yong said, underscore the urgent need for rigorous verification protocols before publishing any content created or enhanced by AI.

He emphasised that AI should be seen as a tool for empowerment, not a replacement for human creativity.

Echoing these sentiments, Prof Dr Manjit Singh Sidhu, an expert from the College of Computing and Informatics at Universiti Tenaga Nasional, observed that Malaysian media organisations had been integrating AI at varying speeds, depending on their readiness and strategic focus.

He said journalists who embraced change and learned to work with AI would not only survive the evolving landscape but also shape the future of trustworthy, meaningful journalism.

He suggested news organisations develop and adhere to strict ethical frameworks when using AI, ensuring transparency in how the technology is applied throughout news production.

To deepen media practitioners' knowledge of AI technology, the Malaysian National News Agency (Bernama) has coordinated five AI training sessions—one each in Kuala Lumpur, Cyberjaya, Sarawak, Sabah and the East Coast.

Meanwhile, recognising the rapid pace of AI advancement, including in journalism, this year's National Journalist Day (Hawana) celebration has adopted the theme 'Journalism in the New Era: Embracing AI, Safeguarding Ethics'.

Communications Minister Datuk Fahmi Fadzil, when announcing the theme on Tuesday, said the rise of AI has rapidly transformed the gathering, processing and dissemination of information, but emphasised that it must not come at the expense of journalistic ethics.

The Hawana 2025 celebration will be held at the World Trade Centre Kuala Lumpur from June 13 to 15, with the highlight—its opening on June 14—scheduled to be officiated by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

More than 1,000 media practitioners locally and from abroad are expected to attend the event. — Bernama