

INTERNATIONAL THE NEWS

Free media vital for protecting basic rights

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ISLAMABAD: United Nations Resident Coordinator in Pakistan, Mr Timmo Pakkala said that independent, free and pluralistic media was important for protecting and promoting the fundamental rights and journalism provides a platform for informed discussion across a wide range of development issues – from environmental challenges and scientific progress to gender equality, youth engagement and peace building.

He said this during an event titled "World Press Freedom Day" organised by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (Unesco) here.

"The United Nations is working under the leadership of Unesco and all stakeholders to create a free and safe environment for journalists and media workers around the world," he added.

The event was officially launched by Dr Kozue Kay Nagata, Director Unesco Islamabad with participation of officials of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, journalists, students and representatives of the development partners, United Nations and Media Development Organizations and Federations.

Dr Nazir Saeed, Secretary

for Information, Broadcasting and National Heritage said that the gathering said that draft version of the Right to Information Law was prepared in consultation with all stakeholders including the opposition parties and would be presented before the next cabinet meeting for approval. New law would provide more freedom and right of access to information for media professionals. He said the government was undertaking serious steps for the protection and safety of the media workers and media houses, adding further an independent commission would be formulated to resolve the issues related to media.

United Nations Resident Coordinator in Pakistan, Mr Timmo Pakkala said, "Independent, free and pluralistic media was important for protecting and promoting the fundamental rights and journalism provides a platform for informed discussion across a wide range of development issues from environmental challenges and scientific progress to gender equality, youth engagement and peace building."

He said, "The UN under the leadership of Unesco and all stakeholders is working together to create a free and safe environment for journalists and media workers around the world."

Dr. Kozue Kay Nagata said, "The Unesco supports this Day to emphasise the importance of freedom of expression and free flow of diversified opinions in all forms of media," adding that this year agenda was timely and vital for democracy, transparency and sustainable economic development.

"There is a greater linkage between press freedom and safety of journalists and achieving Millennium Development Goals (MDG) and advancing post-2015 development agenda, the perception and image of Pakistan can only be bolstered if a free press with responsibility exists which would further help the country for creating a healthy environment for convincing donor countries, boosting foreign investment and trade, tourism and cultural industry and the formation of competent human resources in the country", Dr. Nagata added.

Prominent editor and journalist, M. Zia Uddin said, "Pakistani had vibrant media in comparison to other Muslim States and the rest of the world, adding that the media in Pakistan had been through a critical time of extreme censorship and media control and that the journalists were confronting serious reporting challenges as the whole country became a war zone."