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‘Journalists should know media ethics’

Senior journalists should give their input to juniors on media ethics.

This was stated by veteran journalist Mohammed Ziauddin while addressing a workshop on: “Let Journalism Thrive! Towards Better Reporting, Gender Equality and Media Safety in the Digital Age”.

He said manipulation of digital age was very dangerous so government should make the Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (Pemra) an independent body.

The workshop was organised by Unesco in collaboration with Media House, an NGO, at a local restaurant on Monday.

Mr Zia said media practitioners had been using the new technology very wrongly.

“In the past, journalists used to work under press and publication ordinance. Ziaul Haq promulgated a law according to which a journalist can be punished for giving story against the so-called national interest even if it was based on facts,” he said.

“However after 90s things started changing and it became difficult for the government to control media so it started using different tactics to control media,” he said.

Replying to questions, he said journalists should be trained. Social media should also be managed. Everyone knows that Arab Spring was because of social media, he added.

Senior journalist Hanif Khalid called for responsible journalism.

“India is a bigger democracy but there is a responsible journalism. In the US media is free but it does not violate ethics,” he said.

Mr Khalid said media censorship during the tenure of General Yahya Khan led to the dismemberment of East Pakistan.

Television anchorperson Nadia Mirza said there should be a balanced reporting because extraordinary freedom had been damaging for the media and journalists.

“In electronic media, boards deal the news section and senior journalists control them, but they don’t have access to content of anchors and programmes of current affairs. So sometimes anchors start setting their agendas,” she said.

“During the sit-in of Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI), some anchors supported the party and others took line totally against it but Pemra did not take any notice. In the past, the speeches of MQM chairman Altaf Hussain were telecast for hours but Pemra did not move,” she said.

Ms Mirza was of the view that now people had less confidence in electronic media and they find social media more trustworthy.

Director UNESCO Islamabad Vibeke Jensen in her opening remarks emphasised that media could play a significant role in promoting peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development.

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