

Reporting, editing skills strengthen professionalism in media

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Sharpening reporting and editing skills strengthens professionalism in media and provides safeguards to journalists in their bid to exercise freedom of information.

This was the crux of the first day of the two-day workshop on “Reporting and Editing Skills” organized by the Journalists for Democracy and Human Rights (JDHR) Pakistan in collaboration with the Public Affairs Section of the United States embassy and Lahore Consulate here on Sunday. The resource persons Ana Arana, a senior American journalist from New York and Shafqat Munir, development journalist from Pakistan conducted this workshop.

Thirty-one reporters and sub editors from different newspapers attended the workshop and gave their input during discussion on professional issues regarding story ideas and story writing skills. Both the American and Pakistani resource persons shared the existing journalistic practices in both the countries. There was a general consensus during the technical sessions that journalists could do better news stories of people’s interest if they do home work, conduct research and collect sufficient knowledge and data.

In his opening remarks, Rex Moser, Public Affairs Officer of the US Consulate, said JDHR has undertaken a timely and important task by conducting media capacity building workshop for print media journalists. He said media is free in the United States and the American constitution says that Congress cannot make any laws limiting the freedom of press. He said press influences national and international policy arena. The governments give due importance to media owing to its impacts in societies.

Ana Arana was of the view that journalists across the world have to face tough situations, both working and economic, while discharging their professional assignments. They are attached and harmed. But despite hardships and being low paid, she said, media is socially responsible to cater to the information needs of the citizenry by showing how open information creates transparency, accountability and the growth of democracy. In this regard, reporters need to examine what they report about, how they do their job, how they focus on the problems, desires and need of their audience. She called for building an infrastructure for media that helps regulate, protect and promote and lead to freedom of expression.

The senior American journalist said there is a need to learn how to tell the stories on citizens in the most effective way by pursuing more and more stories on people’s issues. On the count of being responsive to citizenry, journalists need to choose stories that explain how the judiciary works, tax and economic laws are implemented, how budgets are made, how political parties operate and elections are held. The media need to track the decision making process in social services such as education, healthcare and pensions and other development issues. She said the news stories should show readers the links between the access to information and transparent government.

Shafqat Munir said media monopolies and limited access to information are detrimental for freedom of information. Pakistan does have the freedom of information law at federal level but hardly people get information through this process. He suggested there is a need to improve the existing federal freedom of information law and this law should also be replicated by all the provinces in Pakistan if we really want to promote transparency in

governance. He was the opinion that journalists can provide more of safeguards for themselves by following the code of ethics while writing touch stories by making them balance, accurate and truthful.

Moazzam S Bhatti and Amir Suhail of JDHR thanked the participants and the resource persons. Jalil Hassan Raja, Shah Nawaz, Rub Nawaz Bajwa, Ejaz Haider, Zahid Chaudhry, Shahbaz Anwar and Sadia Salahuddin gave brilliant ideas on different stories on environment, education and motor cycle rickshaws.

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