

MERC observes Press Freedom Day

Journalists should try to strike a balance and be real professionals: Prof Talat

Media Education Research Centre (MERC), Kashmir University in collaboration with Jammu and Kashmir Press Association (JKPA) observed World Press Freedom Day at Media House auditorium of the university on Thursday.

Terming journalism as an important profession, Vice Chancellor, Kashmir University, Prof Talat Ahmad said journalists should try to strike a balance and be real professionals.

“They should publish things which reflect both strengths and weaknesses in the society,” he said in his presidential remarks.

Appreciating the work of journalists, Prof Talat said media at times projects some people as demi-gods but fail to cover real social issues.

“Freedom of press is not meant to publish whatever you want. The young journalists should try to project things in right perspective,” he said.

Hailing the performance of MERC, Prof Talat assured all possible help to the department.

“In near future, it will be one of the best centres providing media education in the country,” he added.

Earlier, in his welcome address, Head MERC, Prof Mufeed Ahmad highlighted the contribution of the department in the field of media.

“More than 700 post graduates have passed out from the department and at least 80 per cent of them are working in various media organizations. We have introduced bachelor courses of Mass Communication and Multimedia Production (MCMP) and Mass Communication and Video Production (MCVP). The department has also produced at least 15 MPhil and PhD scholars,” he said.

Prof Mufeed said the department is planning to start some short-term courses in media management and advertising. He sought support of the vice chancellor in this regard. Referring to the emphasis placed on freedom of expression in different religions, he stressed on the need to understand the difference as to who defines the limits of the speech and how restrictive these limits are.

Referring to this year’s press freedom day theme of UNESCO “New Voices: Media Freedom Helping to Transform Societies”, he added that there is need to examine how media freedom can help in transforming societies.

President of JKPA, Ghulam Hassan Kaloo said journalists have suffered and continue to suffer everywhere in the world.

Presenting a paper entitled, ‘Media in Kashmir: Current concerns and future directions’, senior faculty MERC, Nasir Mirza said, “Kashmir presents a unique scenario in terms of functioning of democratic system in the context of South Asian region, there are challenges as well as opportunities for media in Kashmir.”

“Media persons just reflected the turmoil that surrounded them. Newspapers became press note gazettes carrying official hand-outs about the situation. About the contemporary media scene, a sea-change has been witnessed in content, presentation and the printing of newspapers has improved,” he said.

Senior journalist, Muhammad Syed Malik said the aim of journalist should be to search for the truth wherever it is.

“My experience is that news is actually the truth which somebody wants to hide because it is inconvenient to him and a good reporter is that reporter who finds that truth out; rest is all advertisement with no news value,” he said.

Senior journalist and editor-in-chief of Rising Kashmir, Shujaat Bukhari said, “On Press Freedom Day we should remember all the journalists who have laid down their lives while performing their professional duties.”

Talking about the mushrooming of the newspapers in the valley, Bukhari said, “I am not against mushrooming of newspapers in the valley but I always stand for quality journalism.”

Speaking on the status of press freedom in Kashmir, Riyaz Masroor of BBC said, “No doubt we enjoy more freedom in Kashmir to gather news but the fundamental thing we lack is the chance of publishing the news.”

Director Information, Khwaja Farooq Renzushah talked about the responsibilities of media persons. “Some newspapers do the whistle blowing of issues for their own interests. They should work with a sense of responsibility,” he said.

Assistant Dean Students Welfare and PRO KU, Showkat Shafi presented his paper on “Growth, Development and Future of English press in the valley.”

On the occasion, Vice-Chancellor Prof Talat also released latest issue of Media Times- a biannual publication of MERC and a special issue of MERC Times dedicated to the prominent journalist and Bureau Chief of AFP Izhar Ahmad Wani who passed away recently after battling a dreadful illness for last two years. Both these publications are edited by senior faculty member and editor MERC Muslim Jan.

Senior Faculty Member MERC Dr Sabeha Mufti presented vote of thanks on the occasion whereas the proceedings of the event were conducted by Rashid Maqbool, lecturer MERC. Earlier, the proceedings of the day started with an AV presentation titled ‘Journalism – Freedom against Censorship’ produced by faculty member MERC, Syeda Afshana.

