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Content Forum Heralds Ethical Reporting Practices in Collaboration with SASaR Launch

KUCHING, 10 MAY 2024 — The Communications and Multimedia Content Forum (Content Forum), a self-regulatory organisation, is proud to join hands with the Ministry of Women, Childhood and Community Wellbeing Development in Sarawak to develop the Sarawak Suicide Reporting Card (SASaR). This collaborative effort underscores its shared commitment to promoting ethical and responsible reporting practices.

Developed together with media professionals, mental health experts, and individuals with lived experience, SASaR delivers comprehensive guidelines for journalists, editors, and media practitioners on the sensitive issue of suicide reporting. Supported by the Sarawak Social Development Council (MPS), SASaR stands as an essential resource offering guidance covering various aspects of suicide-related news, including attempts, self-harm, and fatalities. The card is available in Malay, English, and Mandarin, to capture the necessary nuances and facilitate accessibility across Malaysia's diverse racial communities.

The launch event, officiated by Dato Sri Fatimah Abdullah, Minister of Women, Childhood and Community Wellbeing Development, emphasised the critical role of media in shaping public opinion. It also highlighted the need for responsible reporting to combat stigma and foster help-seeking behaviour among vulnerable individuals.

“The Ministry, in collaboration with the Sarawak Social Development Council (MPS), remains committed to addressing mental health issues in the community through integrated social support and interventions. Together with strategic partners, we aim to execute programs and initiatives, providing robust support systems, essential resources, and diverse opportunities to effectively impact vulnerable groups for a dignified existence,” stated Dato Sri Fatimah Abdullah in her opening speech.

Furthermore, she urged media outlets to include hotline information in their reporting, which would facilitate immediate assistance for individuals in distress.

The Content Forum is honoured to have played a role in developing the visuals of the SASaR guidelines, with content aligned to ethical journalism standards and practices as outlined in the Content Code, the principal source for industry self-regulation developed by the Content Forum.

"We are fully supportive of the collaborative efforts behind the development of SASaR, ensuring the inclusion of diverse voices and stakeholders, thereby ensuring that the guidelines are relevant and inclusive. Additionally, we continue to stress the importance of responsible social media engagement, and urge all users to thoughtfully consider the repercussions of their posts, especially in the context of tragic events," stated Mediha Mahmood, CEO of the Content Forum.

"As part of our ongoing efforts, the Content Forum is actively engaged in crafting comprehensive ethical reporting guidelines on a broader scale. We are collaborating closely with broadcasters and media entities to uphold ethical journalism standards," she added.

The Content Forum encourages individuals to choose trustworthy news sources that report responsibly and empathetically. Additionally, it calls for users to play a more responsible role on social media by disengaging with harmful content, avoid amplifying them and reporting them to the necessary authorities.

The launch of SASaR, held in conjunction with the forum Program Wacana Bestari: Isu Kesehatan Mental (Isu Bunuh Diri), marks a significant step towards fostering responsible reporting practices and supporting mental health awareness initiatives. The dialogue session was enriched by the insightful perspectives shared by psychiatrist Dr. Ravivarma Rao Panirselvam, AWAS founder Alia Ali, and Mediha Mahmood.

Download SASaR at <https://contentforum.my/download-centre/>

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ABOUT THE CONTENT FORUM

The Communications and Multimedia Content Forum of Malaysia (Content Forum) is an industry forum registered under the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC) and designated by the Communications and Multimedia Act 1998 (CMA'98) to oversee and promote self-regulation of content over the electronic networked medium. The Content Forum consists of key players in the content industry, i.e., advertisers, advertising agencies, broadcasters, content creators/distributors, audiotext hosting service providers, advertising agencies, internet service providers, and civic groups.

Aimed at facilitating self-regulation, which provides an additional layer of consumer protection that complements the legal framework, the Content Forum is committed to governing and promoting the creation, distribution, and consumption of electronic-networked content.

As an industry self-regulatory body, the Content Forum comprises key members of the communications and multimedia content industry, including broadcasters, advertisers, content creators, internet access service providers, and civic groups. This dynamic and robust representation of industry practitioners ensures that content standards continue to be developed with the objective of establishing a level playing field in the industry.

The Content Forum is responsible for the implementation and enforcement of the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Content Code (“the Content Code”). The Content Code was prepared by the Content Forum and first registered with MCMC on 1st September 2004. The Content Code is the principal source for industry self-regulation as it contains governing standards and best practices for content dissemination within the communications and multimedia industry in Malaysia. The main objective of the Content Code is to outline procedures of self-regulation that provides the platform for creativity, innovation and healthy growth of a fast-evolving industry.

The Content Forum houses a Complaints Bureau that is empowered to address all complaints relating to content disseminated over electronic networks. The Complaints Bureau is empowered to investigate possible breaches of the Content Code, mediate disputes, adjudicate cases, publish orders, and impose sanctions where necessary. The Complaints Bureau accepts complaints from industry players and the general public. Additionally, it plays an advisory role to any party that requires guidance on electronic content matters.

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