

The Guyana Press Association joins the rest of the world in observing World Press Freedom Day. This year's observance casts the spotlight on Artificial Intelligence (AI) under the theme “

“Reporting In The Brave New World: The Impact of Artificial Intelligence on Press Freedom and the Media”. In an era where technological advances have resulted in a reduction in the number of persons being employed, the press and the wider media are no different. For instance, the advent of digital technologies has led to multitasking. AI is no different! This technology can aid the work of journalists but at the same time, they and the wider public ought to be cognisant about the pitfalls.

At a time when advertising revenue for legacy media has shrunk and has shifted more to Online Media and Social Media, the Guyana Press Association is of the firm belief that AI applications could be utilised to aid research and produce engaging content at a lower cost but with greater potential for monetization. The Association expects that AI can be used as fact-checking and data analysis and visualisation tools. The outputs, driven by AI, will make content more appealing and credible. On the other hand, the Association urges media houses not to rely on AI technologies to virtually replace all their human staff. The preservation of highly skilled members of the media in the technical and non-technical fields must be balanced with the need to efficiently and effectively serve the public's interest.

The Guyana Press Association believes that AI can have a deleterious effect on press freedom to the extent that the misapplication of this technology can lead to the production of content that can appear authentic and persuasive. Therefore, the Association warns the public against being gullible to what may appear as legitimate and authentic media production ranging from news reports to documentaries. In short, the utilisation of AI for “Reporting In The Brave New World” can impact press freedom and the media, and ultimately, the wider public.

As Guyana prepares for general and regional elections later this year, the Guyana Press Association advises the wider Guyanese public to be extremely vigilant against misinformation and disinformation that may be produced with AI technology and appear to be authentic. Editors and publishers of mainstream legacy and Online news and current affairs publications also need to be alert about submissions by reporters. You are the gatekeepers of professional content that, even without AI, ought to abide by international standards and ethics of journalism. The Association also warns politicians and their handlers against producing or facilitating the dissemination of deceptive election campaign content that may be generated by AI.

In fact, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) aptly notes: “AI is increasingly influencing the integrity of elections, offering tools for fact-checking and combating disinformation while empowering journalists and voters to promote informed

democratic participation. However, it poses risks, as generative AI enables the creation of misleading content like deep fakes, undermining trust in democratic institutions. Addressing these challenges requires collaboration among governments, media, and civil society.”

The Guyana Press Association, finally, believes that AI can be used as an effective tool for public relations. For instance, we recommend that the Guyana Police Force explore the use of AI in generating and disseminating content on the trends of crime from a statistical as well as sociological and demographic perspectives. Such content can be compelling in telling your stories to inform and engage the wider Guyanese public as well as shape public policy. We envisage, too, in the not-too-distant future a Guyana Police Force whose public relations mechanism is equipped with AI to generate accurate and timely news releases. Maybe, too, the Police Force may be able to deploy AI-powered humanoid robots that can provide interviews or hold press conferences as well as provide the most updated crime statistics. These are things that the real human officeholders no longer provide with any detail.

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