

## TELEVISION SHOWS 'NEED NEW RATING SYSTEM'

THE NATION

A new television rating system should be set up to replace the existing one, which has failed to assign content appropriate to viewers of different ages while being "extensively exploited" by producers who cite freedom of expression and are dictated to by advertising revenues, a Bangkok seminar was told yesterday.

Dr Suriyadev Tripathi, director of the National Institute for Child and Family Development at Mahidol University, dismissed producers' claims that they intended morally provocative themes in their soap opera shows to give society "a mirror to reflect itself".

Suriyadev said: "Viewers' mood, while watching the shows and enjoying such content, will be carried away, making their conscience or self-contemplation difficult to occur concurrently.

"While producers say they want their soap operas to prompt the society to reflect on its (mis)behaviour, the shows are full of explicit love scenes, violence and actresses in provocative outfits showing off their cleavages. This certainly doesn't make viewers' cerebra work while enjoying such carnal content.

"A new rating [system] would also help protect viewers, especially the young, and producers and actors should have basic responsibilities," he said.

Dr Phanphimol Lortrakool, a government psychiatrist for children, said +18-rated shows should be aired after 10.30pm and a new rating of +20 between midnight and 5am.

Controversial shows, such as "Golden Orange Flower" - which has prompted a debate and an attempt by the Culture Ministry to intervene - is now on the air in prime time before 9pm, the peak period for advertising revenue.

She said the new airtime-dictated rating system would also give producers greater freedom of expression, while programmes for children would be scheduled in the part of the evening suitable to young viewers' life and health schedules.