

March 14, 2018

TO ALL NEWS EDITORS

PRESS STATEMENT FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

THE National Union of Journalists Malaysia (NUJ) urges the government to repeal the 1984 Printing, Presses and Publishing Act (PPPA) and other relevant laws and regulations that curb the freedom of the press in our country in liaison with its democratic process.

The NUJ wishes to state that during the thirteenth General Elections which took place on May 5, 2013, the new government was supposed to seriously look at the various draconian laws that constrict press freedom and threaten journalists, to make the desired changes possible and to advocate impartial neutral news coverage in order to meet the public's right to know.

While welcoming the positive intention of the government to have a self-regulating media body as stated by Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Ahmad Zahid Hamidi yesterday during a luncheon with media practitioners in Putrajaya, NUJ would like to note that according to its survey done several years back, members polled for the need of an independent and self-regulatory media council (body) to be formed with 50:50 public and media participation.

NUJ has its concerns that the proposed Media Council is to be established as a statutory body and this arrangement is always prejudicial to the mind of the public as being linked to government and thus not truly independent.

NUJ also refers to DPM's speech that the government will be looking at improvements to the Printing Presses and Publications Act (PPPA) after the 14th general elections.

However, the media industry wants to see the government abolish the PPPA and other relevant laws with the setting up of the independent self-regulating media body so that professional journalism can be adhered to, to perform their duties responsibly and safe from any government interference.

According to Reporters San Frontiers (Reporters Without Borders) press freedom index 2017, Malaysia's press freedom is ranked 144th out of 180 countries. Malaysia has fallen to its lowest-ever position in 2016 to 146 out of 180 countries because access to information is becoming more and more limited while one sided reporting is extensive especially in the print media..

The media industry and the public as a whole are seeing this figures regrettably as a worrying inclination stunting the growth and development of media industry in our country as it is undoubtedly also a stumbling block to a democratic process that is stalling or going into reverse. It is undermining human rights issues and press freedom that eventually would create an adverse trend in a developing country such as Malaysia.

NUJ strongly opposes media manipulation by political parties or government monopoly, especially when the press freedom ranking we have seen is closely related to the government of a country that is not epitomizing democratic openness.

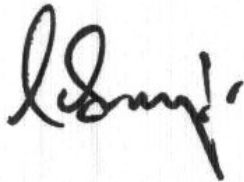
As we all know, the BN government controls the English New Straits Times Group, the Utusan group is UMNO controlled, and MCA which has the "Star" to call its own, the print media has become the mouthpiece of the ruling party instead of playing its role as media watchdog and the mouthpiece of the people.

This has resulted in the newspapers losing their credibility.

The NUJ calls for the government to re-examine the issues curbing press freedom in Malaysia.

Malaysia's press freedom development has been stagnant for the past 60 years and has seen a glaring decline with the system of one-party ruling in Malaysia.

On behalf of the Executive Council,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Chin Sung Chew', written in a cursive style.

CHIN SUNG CHEW
General Secretary, NUJM