

World Press Freedom Day Message By Penang Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng In World Heritage City of George Town, Penang On 2 May 2010.

Selangor's Success In Enacting The Freedom Of Information(FOI) Act Will Be Adopted As Penang's Intent On Enacting The FOI Blocked On Constitutional Grounds By The Penang State Legal Advisor.

Year after year DAP, National Union of Journalists and even Suhakam calls the federal government to abolish the Printing Presses and Publications Act, the Internal Security Act, the Official Secrets Act and other repressive laws inherited from the British colonial days. We even asked for the enactment of the Freedom of Information Act(FOI) to ensure competency, accountability and transparency in governance.

Media freedom deteriorating

However this was ignored and more media curbs imposed. And the first four months of this year alone did not see improvement with harassment of the press continuing.

On April 22nd 2010, a media award winning producer of ntv7 talk show "Editor's Time" Joshua Wong was forced to resign in protest against unreasonable restrictions and "overzealous self-censorship and government interference" against the opposition by those close to the Prime Minister. "This restriction of freedom amounts to a punishment and it affects the professionalism of the team," he said

A few days later, a RTM2 producer Chou Z Lam also claimed political interference when his documentary on the Bakun dam project in Sarawak was cancelled under the direct instruction of RTM director-general Ibrahim Yahaya for fear of affecting BN's chances in this coming Sibu by-election.

Other cases of curbs of press freedom this year includes:-

- In March 2010, the Home Ministry "advised" the China Press to decide on disciplinary action against its editor-in-chief for publishing a report that the Inspector General of Police had resigned. The daily promptly enforced the "advice" by suspending the editor-in-chief, as well as issued a page one apology pertaining to the news report.
- On 26 February 2010, the Home Ministry issued a show-cause letter to The Star over the article "Persuasion, not compulsion" by its managing editor, that was published on Feb 19 pertaining to issues of shariah law. The daily also apologised to its readers
- A week later, The Star refused to publish its columnist Marina Mahathir's

column touching on the caning of women under the Islamic law in February.

- Intimidate book sellers by confiscating books deemed unfavourable to the Barisan government. Among the books seized in January and February this year were copies of “Where is Justice” and “1Funny Malaysia”.

At the same time no action is taken against Utusan Malaysia for its lies against Pakatan Rakyat leaders, preaching racial hatred and even violence. Freedom to lie is not freedom of the press. Similarly newspapers should observe one of the basic tenets of press freedom is to give a right of reply. This right of reply has been denied to repeatedly to PR leaders by the mainstream media controlled by BN.

In Penang, the State Legal Advisor had objected to the Penang state government’s intention to enact a FOI on the grounds that it is unconstitutional. According to her, information is under the Federal list of the Federal Constitution and not within the jurisdiction of the state government. The state government is closely following the efforts by the Selangor state government to enact the FOI and should this be successful will then enact a similar law in the Penang State Assembly.

The press must be free. Let all Malaysians press for freedom!

LIM GUAN ENG