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Zam-Journalists

JOURNALISTS FREE TO DO COVERAGE ON M'SIAN MINISTERS, SAYS ZAINUDDIN

KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 11 (Bernama) -- Information Ministry Parliamentary Secretary Senator Datuk Zainuddin Maidin today refuted claims by certain quarters that there was no freedom for journalists in this country to do coverage on ministers.

Zainuddin, or better known as Zam, said that in Malaysia, the people could see that the prime minister and also other ministers, from the past leadership right up to the leadership of Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, being surrounded by journalists at close range.

"On the other hand in Britain or the United States, we can see the British prime minister or US president being interviewed by journalists only from a distance and as though they are listening to the speeches of the prime minister or president concerned," he told Bernama, here today.

He said it was not proper to make such claims merely because journalists from the internet portal Malaysiakini.com were not allowed to attend any press conferences involving Malaysian cabinet ministers.

"Malaysiakini (reporters) are barred from covering the press conferences not because they are critical of the government but because their credibility is doubtful," he said.

Zainuddin said the latest report by the Far Eastern Economic Review dated Feb 8 which carried an interview with "rogue" currency speculator George Soros, titled "Levelling the Field" and quoting that Malaysiakini as a media organisation which received aid from "Open Society Fund" owned by Soros, proved that Malaysiakini's credibility was doubtful.

Zainuddin claimed that he also had information that Malaysiakini chief editor Steven Gan had once worked for a newspaper which was anti-government in this country.

On efforts by certain quarters to boycott the media which were claimed to be pro-government, he said the efforts appeared to be ineffective.

"Now we see the viewership for TV3 and RTM had increased and the circulation of the major newspapers in the country had also gone up, this shows that these newspapers which employed ethical and professional journalists would continue to enjoy high credibility," he added.

-- BERNAMA

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