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Kadir-Trap

BANNING THE ECONOMIST WOULD BE FALLING FOR ITS TRAP, SAYS KADIR JASIN

KUALA LUMPUR, May 2 (Bernama) -- Banning "The Economist" is not the best way to counter negative reports about Malaysia and its leaders, and in fact it will be seen as falling into a trap set up by foreign media to test the extent of press freedom in the country, said Berita Publishing Group Editor-in-Chief Datuk A. Kadir Jasin.

He said that if the ban on the distribution and sale of the magazine were to be made, Malaysia would be seen as a country which could not be criticised and the present leadership would be viewed as dictatorial.

"That is what it wants...if it is banned, it will become a hero and the journalist concerned will get promoted. If we ban the magazine, we will be falling for its trap," he said.

Kadir, a former chairman of the Malaysian National News Agency (Bernama) said this when interviewed in a talkshow entitled "Campur Tangan Media Asing Di Negara-negara Membangun" (Foreign Media Interference in Developing Countries), telecast over TV1 channel of the Radio and Television Malaysia (RTM), here tonight.

Also a guest in the talkshow was National Union of Journalists (NUJ) Malaysia President Norila Mohd Daud.

According to Kadir, what should be done to counter such negative reports about the country and its leaders would be to reply to the criticisms.

He however felt that Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad should not be the person to rebut the criticisms levelled at him but the task should be carried out by the Cabinet, Chief Secretary to the Government or Umno and the ruling Barisan Nasional (BN).

"In my view, the PM does not rule the country alone, but with the support of the Cabinet, Umno...Dr Mahathir has been leading the country for 20 years with the support of the BN, the people and the Cabinet. I feel, these agencies or groups in the country should reply, not Dr Mahathir," he said.

Norila, meanwhile, was of the view that in the present era of information explosion it would be inappropriate to resort to banning any foreign publication found carrying reports that were not favourable to the country.

She said that coverage by the foreign media on Malaysia, whether good or bad, showed that Malaysia had become an attraction to the outside world.

"In this era of globalisation, I feel we should be more open and should positively accept every writing criticising our bad points. It is inappropriate for us to ban foreign publications merely because they publish articles that hurt our feeling," she said.

-- BERNAMA

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