

Gov't nay to 'rakyat' in name of proposed weekly
Malaysiakini.com
May 3, 2011

The Home Ministry is against the use of the word 'rakyat' in the name for the proposed weekly Utusan Rakyat.

A representative of the ministry's Publication and Quranic Text Control Division told this to Lembah Pantai MP Nurul Izzah Anwar (left) and National Union of Journalists president Hata Wahari during a meeting at the ministry's office in Putrajaya today.

"The ministry is afraid that this may confuse the public about the proposed weekly," related Hata during a press conference after the meeting.

However, the duo, who represented the parties behind the proposed publication, said that they are adamant in pushing ahead with Utusan Rakyat.

"I think we should give due respect and recognition to the rakyat whose command of the language is better than some ministers.

"The name is also part of the essence of what you are," said Nurul Izzah, who asked the assembled reporters how would they feel if they had to change the name of their respective publications.

Hata said that they have explained to the Home Ministry how the name embodies the "soul" of the proposed daily and its intended role of being pro-rakyat.

"Without the word rakyat, we cannot embody that. What would we be called, then? Utusan aaa, or Utusan tut," he joked.

Hata (right) said they have appealed to the ministry and explained their reasons, hoping that the ministry would reconsider.

However, the ministry told them that the ultimate decision lies with the Home Minister, Hishammuddin Hussein, and discussions will be referred to him for further action

Nurul Izzah expressed her hope that the minister would be impartial and not play a game of semantics over the issue, by allowing only those publications close to the government and the ruling BN to use certain words.

The gutsy young MP is on the advisory board of the proposed Utusan Rakyat, along with former Bar Council president S Ambiga.

Alternative publication

It was Nurul Izzah who initially proposed the creation of a newspaper NONE and to dub it Utusan Rakyat as an alternative publication for the rakyat to see the 'facts' and the 'truth' without government interference or the shackles of political ownership common in the mainstream media.

When asked about his connection to Utusan Rakyat and why he is touted to be its chief editor despite NUJ by-laws prohibiting a serving president from holding an executive post, Hata clarified that the publication as it is still does not legally exist and he is not yet holding any post in it.

"As of now I am still NUJ president. Utusan Rakyat's permit is not yet approved, it is not even set up yet.

"When it is up and running and I accept the post of chief editor, then I shall resign as president," he clarified.

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