

MCA: Censoring of Economist is 'bad press'
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A senior MCA leader today reprimanded the Home Ministry for censoring sections of an article on the recent Bersih 2.0 rally carried in the print version of The Economist, saying it will simply make bad press for the country.

MCA vice-president Gan Ping Sieu said blacking out of lines in the article with black ink was an open invitation for "adverse publicity" for the country, when it was already grappling with the intense scrutiny from the international media in the aftermath of the rally.

"The Ministry of Home Affairs should realise that overzealous censorship is counter-productive and can be perceived as an infringement of the freedom of expression and media interference," Gan (left) said in a statement.

"In the aftermath of Bersih 2.0, the authorities ought to have wised up to the fact that over-reaction on their part can fuel public anger towards the government. This can sway public sympathy to causes by organisations like the opposition-backed Bersih 2.0."

Gan, who is also deputy youth and sports minister, said the blacking out of the lines in the article would merely stir the curiosity of those who do not normally read the weekly magazine, especially since the full story could still be found online.

"This will only result in more people learning about the content of the article than it otherwise would have - in the process defeating the ministry's purpose of censoring the article in the first place. All this will only make Malaysia an international laughing stock."

Gan said the Home Ministry should have taken a more "sensible" approach and immediately rebutted the allegations raised in the article based on its own facts and figures, apart from lodging a complaint against the magazine.

Ministry should get 'smart'

DAP adviser Lim Kit Siang also slammed the Home Ministry over the blacking out of selected lines in the article, stating that the decision was born out of incompetence on the part of officers in its Publications Control and Quranic Text Division.

Lim (right) said this only proved that the Home Ministry needed a total revamp to make sure that the country did not have to suffer being made into a joke over bad decisions made by ministry officers.

"If (Prime Minister) Najib (Abdul Razak) is serious about (the) Government Transformation Programme, he should totally revamp the Home Ministry to ensure that it could be 'smart' by firstly, ensuring that only those with IT and information age mindset(s), fully primed so that there is no way to curb information flow, are placed in charge," he said in a statement.

Lim also stressed that the Publications Control and Quranic Text Division should be split into two departments as it "should not come under one roof".

The veteran politician claimed that if the excuse of "censoring incorrect and misleading information" was to be fairly applied to all media organisations in Malaysia, then Umno-owned Utusan Malaysia would be "hitting the newsstands every day with blacked-out headlines" on most, if not all of its pages.

"This is because no other mainstream media in Malaysia can compete with Utusan for the tonnage of garbage, lies and falsehoods it purveys everyday," Lim added.

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