

## **PPPA amendments get nod after much acrimony**

**MalaysiaKini.com**

**April 20, 2012**

**By S Pathmawathy and Hazlan Zakaria**

Parliament adopted the amendments to the Printing Presses and Publications Act (PPPA) at 2.15am today as BN and opposition MPs fired verbal barbs at each other in a heated atmosphere.

Lim Kit Siang (DAP-Ipoh Timor) questioned the government's intentions to "truly allow for freedom of the press", dismissing the amendments to the PPPA as "mere baby steps".

teoh beng hock memorial night 160710 kit siangThe major amendments include provisions to do away with the annual renewal of printing licences and publication permits as well as remove the absolute discretion of the minister on deciding whether to approve new applications or revoke existing ones.

"The Bill is to be debated in such a short time shows that the government is not interested in political transformation and the amendments were done without consultation, all the talk of transformation is just political mimicry," Lim (left) charged.

"These are just baby steps to press freedom. The prime minister has said under his leadership there is more press freedom and it was internationally recognised.

"Malaysia's press freedom index was at 122 in 2011 compared to 141 last year (2010), but the question is are the changes in the press index due to Najib's leadership?

Lim said the that annual press freedom index climbed 19 spots last year "thanks to the downward spirals in the countries being wracked by unrest".

He said that it was not because Malaysia was better but "because it is worse in other countries".

NONEClear examples of freedom being curtailed in the country were the Home Ministry's objection to Internet news portal Malaysiakini's printing licence and the "hounding" of Nanyang Siang Pau and The Star for being "insensitive".

Among others he also said efforts by Media Prima in taking over New Straits Times Press and the appointment of the prime minister's aide to a senior editorial position, also impinged on press freedom.

"The PPPA in its entirety should be repealed and no newspaper should need a permit.

"There are sufficient laws in place to deal with newspapers that deal with false news," stressed Lim, slamming the "piecemeal solutions".

Lim also turned on Abdul Rahman Dahlan (BN-Kota Belud) for tagging the DAP parliament leader as a racist.

Smear bid blows up in face

The BN MP labelled Lim racist as such because of the latter's tweets on the day of political aide Teoh Beng Hock's death, calling on MCA and Gerakan leaders to pressure the government into setting up a royal commission for inquiry into that tragedy.

NONEAbdul Rahman (left) had alleged that Lim's mention of MCA and Gerakan was meant to incite racial sentiments by playing on the anger of the Chinese at Teoh's death.

However, Lim had come armed with a printout of his Twitter timeline from July 16, 2009, and proceeded

to read each tweet out loud in the Dewan Rakyat.

This provoked an altercation with Abdul Rahman and other backbenchers, triggering opposition MPs to jump into the fray.

The uproar forced deputy speaker Wan Junaidi Jaafar to step in and chastise both sides.

"YBs (yang terhormat) it is already late at night, some of us may have gone deaf. I think we have had enough fun let us return to a semblance of a Parliament.

"I would like to remind you that while we have suspended Standing Order 12, others still stand," he said, reminding the MPs to focus their attention on debating the Bill.

Once order was restored, Khairy Jamaluddin (BN-Rembau) took the floor flaying Lim's remarks about "ultimate" press freedom.

"If I remember correctly the Penang state assembly had passed a resolution to ban Utusan (Malaysia) reporters from covering the state assembly.

"PKR de facto leader Anwar Ibrahim would point to TV3 journalists and call them the despicable tools (alat keji) of the BN.

"This is harassment. Our journalists are prevented from doing their jobs and derided," Khairy lashed out.

Deputy Home Minister Abu Seman Yusop, in winding up the debate, refused to entertain any interruption from either side, finally putting the debate to rest.



