

Penang CM, state assembly get earful from journalists
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By Susan Loone

Penang Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng, state executive councillors and the 40 assemblypersons were in for a surprise at the state legislative assembly today when journalists came along with scores of yellow sheets of papers, telling the assemblypersons what the media thinks of their attitudes towards press freedom.

NONEWhile most of the messages were general in nature - pasted on two wooden panels facing the main door of the House lobby - some were sharp reminders targeted at certain personalities, including Lim, the DAP secretary-general.

Lim, who is well-know for initiating several legal actions against newspapers, was told not to ban the media and to allow the previously banned Utusan Malaysia to enter and cover proceedings of the legislative assembly, which began on Monday and will sit until May 15.

NONEOther messages to Lim included "not to hold too many press conferences daily" and "do not be too hardworking and please relax".

Lim was also told not to constantly blame the media when news about his events were not published. A remark was also made about him being late for several functions.

"The CM usually does not give straight answers and instead blames the mainstream media and journalists," read one message.

Deputy Chief Minister I Mansor Othman was chided for "not being approachable" by the media as it is often difficult to obtain comments from him on current issues.

State exco member and Batu Maung assemblyperson Abdul Malik Abul Kassim was said to be "friendly and approachable" but arrives late for functions.

State excos Chow Kon Yeow (DAP-Padang Kota) and Phee Boon Poh (DAP-Sungai Puyu) have been touted as "awesome" for their forthcoming comments and response to the media, and should be emulated by other state officials.

Sungai Pinang DAP rep Koid Teng Guan was told to appear more often in his constituency while Koay Teng Hai (Pulau Tikus - DAP) was criticised for only inviting the Chinese press to his events.

"Equal treatment to the media, respect the fourth estate, and no violence towards journalists" were some of the messages posted on the wall and became a popular sight for all those present at the Dewan today.

Journalists from all newspapers wore black and donned yellow ribbons to mark World Press Freedom Day.

The solidarity act came following an invitation by the Penang Chinese Journalists and Photographers Association (Pewaju) to wear the colours as a show of support for their colleagues who were abused during the April 28 Bersih 3.0 in Kuala Lumpur.

The ban on Utusan was in reference to a decision by the Dewan's powerful rights and privileges committee - which comprise several Umno assemblypersons - to ban the Umno-owned Malay daily after it was found guilty of publishing "slandorous and false news".

Utusan, which was ordered by the Penang High Court to pay RM200,000 in compensation and damages

to Lim over another report allegedly accusing the CM of being a racist, will continue to be banned until it apologises.

The report published in November 2010 with the headline 'Apa status kediaman rasmi Guan Eng?' (What is the status of Guan Eng's official residence?), had offended Lim, who tabled a resolution to ban the newspaper and passed at the assembly sitting in May last year.

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