

'BN still controls media despite changes in PPPA'
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Despite the recent amendments to the Printing Presses and Publications Act (PPPA), the Barisan Nasional government still has effective control over the print media, said the Centre for Independent Journalism (CIJ).

Mechanisms such as show-cause letters, calls to the media dispensing “advice” and summoning of journalists to the Home Ministry remain in place for BN to exert influence over the press, creating a “hostile environment” for press freedom, said the NGO in a press release yesterday.

NONE“(The interference makes) it difficult for conscientious journalists to practise ethics in their daily work, ultimately resulting in self-censorship on their part, or deliberately unethical reporting on the part of others,” it said.

CIJ said accurate reporting was “sorely needed” in light of the recent Bersih 3.0 rally, citing Astro’s censorship of a BBC report, Harian Metro and Utusan Malaysia’s misreporting of an attack on a journalist and New Straits Times’ anti-Islam spin on Australian senator Nicholas Xenophon as examples.

The group also condemned police violence against the media during last Saturday’s Bersih rally, calling the violence “shocking”, adding that the problem was “compounded” by the media not reporting or misreporting on the attacks.

The press statement came in conjunction with World Press Freedom Day, on the heels of the recent Bersih 3.0 rally and Malaysiakini’s own protest against violence against the media displayed that day.

NONEThe NGO also lamented how there has always been little cause to celebrate World Press Freedom Day in Malaysia because of restrictions and political control, adding that “it actually grew worse” this year.

It concluded that the government still exerted a great deal of influence over the mainstream media, and called on the people to “reclaim” their rights to free and fair media.

“The unchanged reality is this: the ruling BN government still has effective control over the Malaysian print media.

“If (the people) want a free and fair election, they should know how crucial it is to have a free and fair media,” it said.