

## **Gov't never muzzled media, says Muhyiddin**

**MalaysiaKini.com**

**July 16, 2012**

**By Aidila Razak**

Claims that the government restricts media freedom have no basis, Deputy Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin said today.

Instead, the government had pledged to "always help create a conducive climate to allow journalists and media to continue playing their role in a democracy".

Speaking at the Malaysian Press Institute's Journalism Award 2011 ceremony, Muhyiddin said if the government muzzled the media, then the media that was critical to government would not exist.

"If there is no freedom, then how could portals and opposition papers, which largely criticise, twist the truth and slam the government through non-factual reports, exist?"

Speaking to a room of media personnel in Damansara, he said the government was constantly aware that media needed "ample freedom" to play its role and to highlight issues faced by the people.

"They also play a role to check and correct public policies which go against the interests of society. The government is always open to criticism and corrections," Muhyiddin added.

All the same, he said the media has a social obligation to disseminate news that unite the people and not "split them into groups that are suspicious of each other."

Proof of commitment

The education minister said proof of the government's commitment to media freedom was evident through amendments made to the Printing Presses and Publications Act 1984.

He said the government, via the Attorney-General's Chambers, continued to review the PPPA and has committed to a self-regulatory media council.

"This should delight journalists who have specifically fought for a media council such as this," he said.

Muhyiddin earlier presented the Anugerah Tokoh Wartawan Negara to veteran journalist Kadir Jasin .

In his acceptance speech, Kadir, who started as a cadet reporter with Bernama in 1969, thanked his teachers, parents, and "beautiful women for whom I had penned limericks and poems".

Recalling his years as a young reporter, Kadir said back then reporters, both junior and senior, had easier access to national leaders.

He said that despite the communist insurgency, first and second premiers Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra and Abdul Razak Hussein were always surrounded by the rakyat with security personnel only observing from a distance.

On the flip side, Kadir said the media today for all the conveniences technology had to offer, appeared to have replaced creativity with "copy-and-paste" journalism, no thanks to Google and Yahoo.

"Plagiarism and fakeness replace authenticity," he said, lamenting also that reporters no longer ask their sources "sharp" questions.

NONEKadir is the ninth person to receive the award, after A Samad Ismail, Lee Siew Yee, Ishak Muhammad (Pak Sako), Mohamed Fuad Stephens, Melan Abdullah, Mazlan Nordin, Zainuddin Maidin (left) and CC Liew.

Humbly, he said he was only similar to Samad in the way they used expletives against their staff and that the only thing he shared with CC Liew was a striptease show featuring the legendary Rose Chan.

"Other journalists from that era (in the room) need not pretend they didn't go, too," he said to laughter.