

**On press freedom, PKR rues 'foreign perception' claim
MalaysiaKini.com
July 3, 2013**

PKR's Petaling Jaya Selatan MP Hee Loy Sian has expressed disappointment with Communications and Multimedia Minister Ahmad Shabery Cheek for 'skirting' his question on the status of press freedom in Malaysia.

NONEIn a parliamentary question, Hee (left) had asked the ministry what steps would be taken to improve Malaysia's standing in the World Press Freedom Index, compiled annually by Reporters sans Frontières (Reporters without Borders, RSF).

During Question Time in the Dewan Rakyat yesterday, he said Ahmad Shabery did not address this directly but attributed Malaysia's ranking to "perception" by foreigners.

"I am very disappointed with the minister's answer. The government is still denying (the situation and is) not concerned about Malaysia slipping down the index," he said in a statement yesterday.

"The government should ... remedy the situation by providing equitable access to the mass media, particularly Utusan Malaysia, TV3 and others."

The 2013 World Press Freedom Index placed Malaysia No 145 out of 179 countries, the lowest ranking since RSF began issuing the annual index in 2002.

NONEAhmad Shabery (left) also reportedly told the Dewan Rakyat that different countries have different "values" when it comes to press freedom and that Malaysia's values are suited to its laws and culture.

"The perception of foreigners is different from time to time. In relation to this, the government is monitoring the index, in particular the Home Ministry and this ministry," he said, according to Hee's statement.

"As proof that liberal attitudes and rights to expression are implemented well in this country, all opposition parties are free to publish their own newspapers without any restriction.

"At the time, online news portals are given the space to air their opinions and information on many issues. A significant portion of them are driven by opinions from the opposition."

Hee rebutted Ahmad's Shabery's claim that the opposition is free to publish party organs, pointing to the Home Ministry's occasional seizure of copies of Harakah, Rocket and Suara Keadilan.

Ablog and pod castingmad Shabery had also said social media users are "still" allowed freedom to express their opinions, as long as this is within the law.

"This shows that the degree of freedom of expression in Malaysia is a lot better than (what has been) described ..."

The ministry, he added, is committed to discussing the concept of freedom of speech - and limits for individuals - with stakeholders.

Copyright © 1999-2012 Mkini Dotcom Sdn. Bhd
Source: <http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/234630>