

Penang PKR reps chip in to help Mkini build a home
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Three Penang PKR assemblypersons have purchased a brick each to help Malaysiakini build a home, which the news portal has purchased in Petaling Jaya and is expected to move into next year.

State executive councillor Dr Afif Bahardin said joining Malaysiakini's 'Buy a brick campaign' is the party's way of showing its support for the portal's news coverage and content, which so far has upheld the principles of media freedom.

"We feel Malaysiakini has continued to uphold its principles of integrity and journalistic ethics in its news coverage and reporting," said the Seberang Jaya assemblyperson at his office last Monday.

"We hope with the support of all those who believe in press freedom, Malaysiakini will continue to move forward and be an example to all media organisations in Malaysia that they must continue to fight for press freedom, and the freedom to report the truth," said Afif, 28.

Afif's remarks came following weekly magazine The Heat's indefinite suspension by the Home Ministry, which denied that the action was related to the paper's report on Prime Minister Najib Razak's purported lavish spending.

Following the action on The Heat, the Movement of Angry Media (Geramm) will be holding a protest this Saturday to campaign for the suspension to be lifted.

On criticisms towards the party which are published in Malaysiakini, Afif said the news portal does not represent PKR so it is up to the people to decide if their coverage is credible or not.

"Malaysians are educated and wise enough to judge any news that is being given to them. As you can see, certain media organisations which does not uphold the integrity of reporting, can see how it affects their sales and how the society ridicule their news coverage or content," he said.

"The way to move forward is to uphold press freedom. By promising the people transformation, the ruling party should really fulfill their promises of making Malaysia a liberal and free country," added the state PKR Youth chief.

Bukit Tengah assemblyperson Ong Chin Wen said he decided to purchase a brick because of a "historical bond" he shares with Malaysiakini.

"I joined politics around the same time Malaysiakini started (in 1999)," quipped the second-term assemblyperson, who beat state BN chief Teng Chang Yeow in Bukit Tengah in the May 5 general election.

Malaysiakini started its website as Malaysians went to polls at the 10th general election, a year after former deputy chief minister Anwar Ibrahim was sacked from his post, and went on to lead PKR and the opposition movement.

Ong said the latest drop in Malaysia's World Press Freedom Index - from 122 to 145th place was "not a good sign".

"It shows how critical is the need for an independent press. Malaysiakini is the pioneer and forerunner in this area. To support Malaysiakini's building a home is to support independent media," said the 36-year-old lawyer.

"Hopefully with a new home, Malaysiakini can grow bigger although the challenge is always there so we hope it will always remember its origins which is to fight for press freedom," he added.

'An independent media as the fourth estate'

Machang Bubuk assembly person Lee Khai Loon said Malaysia needs an independent media as the fourth estate to keep state and federal governments in check.

Lee said the media's role is also to help the public understand the policies that affects them like the federal government's planned implementation of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) in April in 2015.

"It has become very obvious how the government used the media to promote the 'benefits' of GST but in truth, many on the ground are affected by the various price hikes even before the GST was announced," said Lee, 35.

"The voices of many of those affected are not covered by the media. An independent media can provide a space or platform for people to voice out their views on this," he added.

Lee said by buying bricks, he hopes to see Malaysiakini become the people's media, to provide another side of the story for public consumption, and to increase the

power of the people, whether at the state or federal government level.

"If we truly understand and support the role of the media as the fourth estate, it is to empower the media as well," Lee quipped.

The three assemblyperson handed over their cheques to Malaysiakini at Afif's state exco office at Komtar's 52nd floor.

Their contribution adds to the RM771,900 already raised by Malaysiakini in its campaign which started last month and will run until Jan 15, where supporters can buy a brick(s) - and have their names engraved on it - with a contribution of RM1,000.

Hoping to raise RM3 million in the 60-days campaign, Malaysiakini also offers corporate sponsorship packages of RM25,000 and RM50,000.

In addition, supporters will receive Malaysiakini subscriptions and advertising equal to the amount contributed.

The money collected from the campaign will be used to supplement the RM6.1 million cost of the new building to be named @Kini, located in Section 51, Petaling Jaya.

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