

**Don't ape Singapore in shutting media, Najib told
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PKR vice-president N Surendran has slammed Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak's move to sue Malaysiakini, calling it a dangerous move akin to muzzling alternative voices.

The opposition MP (right) said that Najib should not ape Singapore, which today only has a single thriving state-owned media company, as he claims the neighbouring nation's prime minister frequently sued and bankrupted opposition news organisations.

"We don't want the same trend in this country. We want alternative voices, people's voices.

"Malaysiakini is one such alternative voice and they give fair coverage to both sides (of the political divide). So, this is an attempt to silence Malaysiakini and it is very unbecoming, in fact, shameful of the PM," he told reporters in Kuala Lumpur today.

PM Najib is suing the nearly 15-year-old news portal Malaysiakini for publishing two articles which compiled readers' comments last month pertaining to the short-lived Terengganu leadership crisis.

Named as defendants are Malaysiakini publisher Mkini Dotcom Sdn Bhd, its editor-in-chief Steven Gan and chief editor Fathi Aris Omar.

Malaysiakini had previously offered Najib the right of reply using the same space but he did not take up offer.

Surendran, the MP for Padang Serai, called Najib "a hypocrite" for minding readers' comments in Malaysiakini while letting Umno-owned Utusan Malaysia run free with its daily slate of defamatory articles about the opposition.

So, Najib does not take any action on Utusan and he dares to come and sue Malaysiakini. How is that fair?

"This shows hypocrisy, and Najib is a real hypocrite for suing Malaysiakini when he allow Utusan to defame the opposition, day in, day out," Surendran said.

While Najib's move has received brickbats from various parties at home and abroad, it was cheered on by at least two ministers under him.

Umno vice-president Shafie Apdal was reported saying by Berita Harian, Sinar Harian and Utusan today that his boss acted correctly as Malaysiakini twisted facts and "made up stories".

"When a news report has untrue elements and no facts, that information should not be passed around and widely publicised. If you do this, you are making up stories," Shafie was quoted saying by Berita Harian today.

Shafie, the minister of rural and regional development, said that even though the news report was compiled from readers' comments, it should have not been carried with a headline which allegedly mislead readers to think that it was factual.

Youth and Sports Minister Khairy Jamaluddin, too, applauded Najib's "aggressive move" as he said it showed that alternative media must also pay the price for journalism, the same as mainstream media.

The suit charges that the compilation of readers' comments in two "Yoursay" articles published on May 14, namely "A case of the PM reaping what he sows" and "How much will Najib spend to keep Terengganu?", were defamatory.

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