

Explain policies on TV, PM and cabinet urged

MalaysiaKini.com

Apr 25, 2015

By Koh Jun Lin

The Prime Minister and his Cabinet should address matters of public concern on live television, said former treasury secretary-general Sheriff Mohd Kassim.

Making a reference to Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak's interview with TV3 on April 9, he suggested that future broadcasts should also be conducted with two interviewers – one playing the role of a supporter, the other a critic.

In addition, he said there should also be a panel discussion immediately after to discuss what the premier had said.

"By making the interview a drama not to be missed, the rakyat in the kampungs will be quite happy to forgo their Bollywood movie and watch something which is more educational," he said.

Sheriff said this is being done by the Western media and should be emulated in Malaysia.

He is a member of the group of former senior servants, also referred to as G25, who wrote an open letter to the prime minister calling for respect for the Federal Constitution, and raised their concern for creeping Islamisation and desecularisation amidst an increasingly polarised society.

"It is better for them and for the country that they hear the explanation about the national debt, the fall in the ringgit, the goods and services tax, or 1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB) directly from the responsible ministers, than to hear from the hate-mongers in the social media," he said in his talk.

The talk was organised by the group Peace, Conscience and Reason (Pcore) at the Royal Selangor Club in Kuala Lumpur today.

Need for free and independent media

In Najib's pre-recorded interview with TV3, the premier tried to address a range of issues, including 1MDB and allegations linking him to the murder of Mongolian national Altantuya Shaariibuu.

However, observers such as Pulau MP Nur Jazlan Mohamed had pointed out that the explanations have failed to satisfy Najib's critics, with speculations still rife around the issues.

Meanwhile, in his presentation, Sheriff also spoke on the importance of a free media and rubbished claims that Malaysia cannot have a free media because of sensitivities in the

multiracial society.

He argues that most Malaysians are “issue-oriented”, rather than “race-oriented”.

He said that even 'extremists' should be free to use the media, but they must be hauled up to explain themselves if their statements have exceeded limits.

“This is where a free and independent media can play a role in putting the recalcitrant on the mat to explain their behaviour.

“Chances are, no one would like to be exposed in the media for his stupidity,” Sheriff said.

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