

## **'Blocking of Sarawak Report is questionable'**

**MalaysiaKini.com**

**July 20, 2015**

The Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission's (MCMC) justifications to block access to whistleblower site *Sarawak Report* are questionable, said the Centre for Independent Journalism (CIJ) in a statement today.

The journalism watchdog said the MCMC seemed to have acted as both prosecutor and judge when it said *Sarawak Report* had violated Section 211 and 233 of the Communications and Multimedia Act (CMA).

"Those sections state the offence of posting offensive content on the internet, and the penalties that a court may impose if a person or content provider is found guilty.

"In this case, MCMC appears to have assumed the role of prosecutor and judge and found *Sarawak Report* guilty of an offence under the CMA without a prosecution or a court finding," it said.

It also pointed out the Section 263(2) of the CMA does not provide the MCMC with powers to block websites.

"The blocking of *Sarawak Report* without a clear, legitimate purpose and without reference to a proper law authorising such blocking of content is a breach of the guarantee to freedom of expression under Article 10 of the Federal Constitution," the CIJ added.

### **'Public complaints'**

The MCMC blocked access to *Sarawak Report* yesterday, claiming it had received public complaints about the website publishing information that has not been verified and it is being investigated.

This is in regards to its exposes on 1MDB, including allegations that US\$700 million had been banked into Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak's (*photo*) personal accounts

Centre For A Better Tomorrow (Cenbet) said the move could be a harmful precedent for action against online media.

"If this principle is applied consistently, a lot of websites and online news portals may have to shut down.

"This would also set an unhealthy precedent in terms of digital access in the long run," it said in a statement.

Joining the chorus was the Centre to Combat Corruption & Cronyism (C4), which said blocking *Sarawak Report* would not make the government's problems regarding 1MDB go away.

As such, it said the government should make the Auditor General's report on 1MDB public, to resolve all speculation against 1MDB.

"Blocking *Sarawak Report* will not make the problem go away, as the root of the problem remains unresolved. It is a kin to dousing a raging fire with a bucket of water.

"It is thus imperative and absolutely necessary for the auditor general's report to be made public urgently, so that the truth can be unraveled once and for all," the corruption watchdog said.