

Party organs should be readily available to all citizens

Malaysiakini.com

July 27, 2010

The Writers Alliance for Media Independence (Wami) strongly condemn the government for deliberately not renewing or delaying the renewal of publication permits for three opposition party organs, namely Suara Keadilan, Harakah and The Rocket. To date, only Harakah's permit is renewed.

Wami holds that in a democracy where citizens are free to choose their reading material, party organs with a narrow appeal cannot be sold beyond their circle of party loyalists.

Home Minister Hishammuddin Hussein's assertion that the party organs must stick to the ministry's guideline and him restricting their sales to party members only suggests that these party organs are actually popular beyond their membership.

And why would non-members spend their hard-earned money to buy overly partisan views? The answer is simple - all the mainstream media are now strictly controlled by the government through censorship made possible by restrictive laws like the Printing Presses and Publications Act (PPPA).

The opposition politicians are not only denied their right to reply by these government-controlled mouthpieces such as Utusan Malaysia but they also rarely have any opportunity to put forward their views on the state-owned television and radio stations.

Wami is also deeply concerned about the Home Minister's announcement that a 'committee of truth' will be formed to stop dissemination of false news. In today's circumstances, such a committee will become but another tool of the BN to control media.

Wami calls upon all Malaysian citizens to protest the attempt to stop the publication of these three party organs. Such attempts are not only discrimination against the opposition parties but more importantly, undermine citizens' efforts to be informed.

All Malaysians should further press for a comprehensive reform of media laws, especially the Printing Presses and Publications Act (PPPA) and we urge members of public to write to the PM and Home Minister to demand the ban on the three party organs be lifted.

The BN federal government should learn from and follow the example of Selangor which has tabled Malaysia's first freedom of information legislation.

The writer is chairperson, Wami.

Copyright © 1999-2007 Mkini Dotcom Sdn. Bhd.

Source : <http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/138437>