



Lift selective press bans, NUJ tells political parties
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The National Union of Journalists has renewed its call to the Pakatan Rakyat parties to lift their selective ban on journalists from covering their events.

At the same time, its newly-elected president Hata Wahari - a journalist of 15 years who is with *Utusan Malaysia* - said certain parties in BN should also allow alternative news portals to cover their functions.

"The journalists under the NUJ are professionals who adopt the principles of the highest standards of press freedom and journalistic ethics.

"NUJ is also aware that the ban has been going on for a long time and that it gives a bad implication of the media freedom standards in the country.

"We believe that every journalist, whether from independent news portals such as *Malaysiakini* and *The Malaysian Insider*, mainstream media, small newspapers or party organs, should not be barred from covering any function," he said in a statement today.

Contacted later, Hata (*left*) said that he was prepared to meet and discuss with leaders from both sides of the political divide on lifting the ban.

"We want to negotiate and set the guidelines, together with them, on what journalists can cover," he said.

PKR has cited biased reporting

The issue of banning media organisations from certain events only caught national headlines when journalists from *Utusan Malaysia* and *New Straits Times*, which are directly owned by Umno, were barred from covering Pakatan functions in 2008.

It started with PKR banning *Utusan* journalists from covering its press conferences at the Petaling Jaya headquarters that year, citing biased reporting.

The DAP-led Penang government later followed suit by barring journalists from *Utusan* and *New Straits Times* from covering their post-exco meeting press conferences.

However, Umno has been consistently barring independent media outfits from covering their annual general assemblies, denying the journalists passes that would give them access to the functions.

Independent or alternative media portals have also had run-ins with the BN-led federal government and it was only in 2008 that the Information Ministry issued media accreditation cards to online news portal journalists.

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