

Khairy all out for press freedom
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Giving the mainstream media more freedom will resolve the credibility crisis faced by them, said Rembau parliamentarian Khairy Jamaluddin today.
MCPX

Delivering the keynote address at the National Union of Journalists (NUJ) forum in Kuala Lumpur this morning, the rookie politician said it is necessary for mainstream media to regain their credibility.

"Credibility is very important. That will be the single determinant whether news is being accepted and disseminated.

"So to overcome this credibility issue, there must be some reforms in the mainstream media," he said.

khairy nst forum 100508Khairy then laid out a roadmap in creating greater press freedom whereby the ultimate destination is the repeal of the Printing Presses and Publications Act.

The deputy Umno Youth leader first suggested for the media to move towards being independently regulated by setting up a Press Complaints Commission.

He noted that the law cannot be repealed without having a mechanism in place first to replace the PPPA and the bureaucratic oversights faced in the Home Ministry.

"I think the government needs some comfort that the media has thought through this that there's already a system in place to look after their concerns like racial, religious incitement and others," he elaborated in a press conference.

Khairy also said the media operatives can also encourage Home Minister Syed Hamid Albar to abolish the annual KDN licensing requirement as he previously made this suggestion public.

Equal freedom and responsibility

"Next, the media – both mainstream and online – should strengthen its capacity building initiatives to ensure best reporting practices through rigorous training," he said.

"Once we have thought through such a roadmap that is properly sequenced, that holds at its heart both freedom and responsibility in equal measure, I think we can and should repeal the PPPA," he added.

raja petra released from prison 090508 05He also touched briefly on blogger Raja Petra Kamarudin's sedition charge and said this phenomenon will "embolden the alternative Internet media to carve out greater space for themselves in the Malaysian public consciousness".

"I think that it may be difficult for the so-called mainstream media to keep pace in terms of

news value – regardless of the veracity of the reporting – under current circumstances.

“Obviously the arrest and charge of RPK will ignite more debate in the alternative media online. I think a lot of people will automatically flock to the online new sources what’s happening.

“With the trial fixed in October there will be five months of hyperactivity online. That’s just a statement of fact,” he explained.

Raja Petra was charged for sedition on Tuesday over his Malaysia Today article that allegedly implied that Deputy Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak and his wife of being involved in the killing of Mongolian national Altantuya Shaariibuu.

Quizzed on the move by civil society to boycott the newspapers, Khairy disagreed with their actions.

“I don’t think there should be a move to boycott anybody. Consumers, readers and the public should be free to decide on what they want to read and what news they want to accept and what they believe to be the most authentic and credible news source.

“People tend to believe the alternative media more than the mainstream media and I think something needs to be done and that is to remove this stigma of the mainstream media being under these restrictions,” he said.

Important political phenomenon

Khairy was also asked about the role of bloggers during the March 8 general elections to which he said their impact was quite significant especially in the urban areas.

“I think they coloured some views and some opinions were solidified through blog postings and discussions in the blogs. So it is quite an important political phenomenon.

“Perception and reality are equally important in politics. Of course there was dissatisfaction on the ground but it was exacerbated and accentuated by what people read be it in newspapers or blogs,” he said.

anwar khairy 150807However, Khairy declined to answer any political questions but laughed off rumours that he has been working together with PKR de facto leader Anwar Ibrahim.

“That’s in the realm of fantasy. I don’t even want to dignify that with a comment,” he chortled.

Clashes between the two has been made evident in public when Khairy alluded that Anwar was a homosexual, and a man of low morals who also has no Islamic values during a ceramah on Feb 20 in Lembah Pantai.

Anwar subsequently initiated defamation proceedings requesting for a public apology and sought RM10 million for allegedly tarnishing his reputation.

Khairy was once the country’s ‘media darling’ when he was seen as a rising political star in the Umno Youth wing.

However, his reputation in the public eye has taken a dip after accusations of cronyism and nepotism due to his relationship with Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi who is his father-in-law.

The NUJ forum entitled, 'General Elections 2008: Press Freedom' was organised to commemorate the May 3 World Press Freedom Day.

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