

Govt To Study Media Censorship To Be In Line With Changing Landscape, Says Najib
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KUALA LUMPUR -- Najib Tun Razak said the government would study how to implement media censorship in line with the changing socio-political landscape.

The prime minister said this step was taken so that the government would not be seen as failing to understand media censorship and how to deal with the issue.

At the same time, he said, the government would respond to allegations in the local and international media and would take action under the law if the allegations were defamatory.

"If we want to carry out media censorship in this new era, (and) new landscape, we should ask ourselves whether the censorship is effective and relevant or not.

"Is it meaningful in the first place?...and any form of censorship actually does us more bad than good," he said when speaking at a breaking-of-fast with the media hosted by Bernama at Wisma Bernama, here, on Monday.

For example, he said, censoring of parts of a news article on Malaysia in "The Economist" magazine recently, had instead turned the issue written about into a bigger news item.

"So, is this action necessary? I think we no longer need to do this. If the international media wants to criticise us, let it be. If we need to (respond), we engage them; we give our side of the story and if they cross the line, we have to resolve it through legal means.

Najib also noted the case of Information Communication and Culture Minister Dr Rais Yatim winning a defamation suit against a local blogger recently.

"That is a very good example where we can resolve it (defamation). If the media has published a story that is defamatory, we should take legal action but censoring is no longer an effective means and should be reviewed. The government will review its policy towards censorship," he said.

He said the landscape and surroundings had changed as there were three elements that had about a radical change, namely the information technology explosion that was still going on, globalisation that had created a borderless world, and the people's increasingly high level of education.

The prime minister said the media was indeed a very vital channel and media practitioners had the huge responsibility of disseminating news, and accurate and true information.

"For us running the government's administration, we too depend on the media as one of our responsibilities to make our efforts acceptable to the people."

He said effective communication was not only through the conventional way but the approach taken should take into consideration the changing landscape and environment.

Najib said the big challenge was that reality was seen differently from perception.

"The war of perception is not sometimes, but always bigger than truth or reality," he added.

Also present at the "buka puasa" was Najib's wife Rosmah Mansor and their children, Norashman Razak and Nooryana Najwa.

(Bernama)

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