

**BN-Controlled Media Degenerating Into 'Blackout Papers'**  
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**by Lim Kit Siang**

For the past three consecutive days, the Barisan Nasional-controlled media have degenerated further to become “blackout papers”, over three episodes, viz:

Firstly, over the call on Tuesday by 17 international and national environmental groups and activists, including Greenpeace and Swiss-based Bruno Manser Fund, addressed to the Attorney-General, Malaysian Anti-Corruption Agency Chief Commissioner and the Inspector General of Police for the arrest and criminal prosecution of Sarawak Chief Minister, Abdul Taib Mahmud and his 13 family members for massive graft and plundering of Sarawak's rich natural resources;

Secondly, the Penang High Court judgment on Wednesday against Utusan Malaysia for defamation against Penang Chief Minister and DAP Secretary-General Lim Guan Eng for its article “Kebiadaban Lim Guan Eng” of 20th December 2010, and the High Court award of RM200,000 for general and aggravated damages and RM25,000 for costs against Utusan; and

Thirdly, the release yesterday of the latest report by Washington-based financial watchdog Global Financial Integrity (GFI) that Malaysia has maintained its position as one of the top five countries in the world suffering the highest illicit capital outflow in the past decade, 2000-2009, involving over RM1 trillion (US\$338 billion or RM1,077 billion) as a result of corruption and misgovernance!

Apart from one small inconsequential paragraph about the Utusan judgment, there have been total blackout of these three developments in the Barisan-controlled “mainstream media”.

Recently, coinciding with the UMNO General Assembly, Malaysia suffered its worst international report card for anti-corruption when the Transparency International (TI) Corruption Perception Index (CPI) 2011 gave the country its worst ranking in 17 years as well as the lowest-ever CPI score - placed No. 60.

With the gregious “blackout” of unfavourable news by Barisan Nasional mainstream media as happened blatantly in the past three days, Malaysia's press freedom index is set to nosedive further in future – as if Malaysia's press freedom index is not bad enough!

In conjunction with the World Press Freedom Day in May this year, Malaysia was ranked 143 out of 196 countries in terms of press freedom, categorised as “not free”, in the Freedom of the Press Survey 2011 by US-based Freedom House.

After the “black eyes” by Transparency International and Financial Global Integrity, and the bulldozing of the undemocratic and repressive Peaceful Assembly Bill in Parliament, Malaysians must be prepared to suffer more “black eyes” by other international watchdogs for freedom, integrity and good governance in the coming year.

LIM KIT SIANG (16th December 2011)

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