

## **Blocking Media Freedom Nothing New In Penang**

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**By Koay Kar Huah**

It comes as no surprise that DAP which depicts itself as a staunch supporter and defender of press freedoms will be at the forefront in clamping down on the rights of journalists who are only performing their duties to report the news.

News reports of Penang Island Municipal Council (MPPP) councillor Ong Ah Teong barring reporters disallowing Utusan Malaysia and New Straits Times journalists from covering a cleanliness check jointly conducted by the MPPP and the North East District Health Office on a restaurant in Batu Feringhi are further proof that the DAP-helmed state administration are once again hypocrites with its claims to uphold freedom of information or media freedoms.

Ong's instruction is an indictment against Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng and other Pakatan elected representative that they have arrogantly chosen to ignore the media fraternity's messages urging more press freedoms and fair treatment to all media organisations which written on yellow notes and pasted on two panels facing the main door of the state legislative assembly hall on 3 May 2012.

What is Ong who is a personal aide to Keramat DAP state Assemblyman Jagdeep Singh Deo or MPPP or the state government trying to hide ? What sort of information can be so sensitive to prevent Utusan and NST from reporting whilst all other members of the media corp are given access to for publication or broadcast through their respective agencies? It is a case of double standards and self-defeating tactics because ultimately, the news still reaches the public.

Obscuring negative feedback

Perhaps Ong wants to prevent the pressmen from hearing any gaffes similar to the "tutup kedai, balik India" slur allegedly uttered to a nasi kandar restaurant owner during a raid in early January 2011 by DAP Komtar state Assemblyman Ng Wei Aik who later denied so.

It is also a case of Guan Eng, Ong and other Pakatan cohorts being unable to accept constructive criticism on the shortcomings of their leadership.

Examples of DAP obstructing journalists or civil servants carrying out their jobs

Other cases where interference by the DAP-headed Penang government or threats of punitive action had clearly discriminated against Utusan, NST and Berita Harian are:

- 1) Prohibiting Utusan, NST and Berita Harian from covering proceedings during the Penang state legislative assembly; or any official or private functions which Guan Eng attends.
- 2) Threatening 84 Chinese primary schools that allocation of state funds will be aborted if they subscribed to Utusan or Berita Harian.
- 3) Abruptly terminating a press conference with lawsuit threats when questions were posed over a matter related with his private life.

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