

Media must be free, says PM

'The government has never prevented the media from publishing reports'

MELAKA: To ensure freedom of expression in the country, the media should remain free to operate without any interference from other parties, says Prime Minister Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob.

He said the government had never prevented the media from publishing any reports, and had in fact used certain news articles as a guide for taking follow-up action, such as in extending assistance for the well-being of the 'Malaysian Family'.

"The government always takes note of reports published in the media. All government ministries and agencies always cooperate with the media by facilitating in the dissemination of balanced, accurate and authentic information which is to the satisfaction of the whole Malaysian Family.

"In the interest of the Malaysian Family and the country's development, I can give assurance that the government has nothing to hide in the dissemination of information," he said when launching the National Journalists Day (Hawana) 2022 celebration themed "People's Voice, National Aspiration" yesterday.

Also present was Communications and Multimedia Minister Tan Sri Annuar Musa.

Among the media practitioners from Indonesia who attended the event were chief editors and leaders of the Malaysian-Indonesian Journalists' Association (Iswami).



Informed: Ismail Sabri (right) reading a newspaper article about himself at the launch of Hawana 2022 at a hotel in Melaka. - Bernama

Representatives of journalists from Indonesia and Vietnam were in attendance, too.

Ismail Sabri acknowledged the role of journalists as the Fourth Estate who, together with the executive, legal and judiciary branches, works with the government to realise a country's development agenda.

The government hopes that journalists would continue to be proactive and write fair reports when suggesting solutions to any issues

raised, he added.

"I am confident that the check-and-balance approach taken on every piece of information received before publication will continue to be a practice of the media to avoid any misreporting that can undermine the integrity of the media," he said

- The Prime Minister also congratulated the Malaysian National News Agency (Bernama) for continuing with the initiative to organise

Hawana 2022 with the support of other media organisations.

He announced a RM1mil allocation to Iswami for it to implement activities that can strengthen media ties between Malaysia and Indonesia as well as other neighbouring countries.

"It is hoped that with this allocation, Iswami can plan programmes between the media of the two countries, including journalists exchange, seminars, forums, workshops and webinars that can enhance the knowledge of media practitioners and serve as a bridge for issues of mutual interests.

"You can ask for more if this is not sufficient," he said, reported Bernama.

He said the Iswami concept should be expanded to cover other Asean members, to boost ties among journalists in the region and help promote Malaysia as an investment and tourism destination through the publication of news reports and features.

Yesterday's celebration saw the reading of the Melaka Declaration 2022 that contains the views and aspirations of journalists.

The highlight of the event was the presentation of the Hawana 2022 Award to professional journalists, individuals and organisations who have made contributions not only in the field of journalism but in shaping the minds of the people through their work.

May 29 was gazetted as National Journalists Day to mark the publication of *Utusan Melayu*, the first newspaper edition in Malaysia, on May 29, 1939.

The inaugural Hawana celebration themed "Defending the Nation, Building the Country" was held on April 11, 2018 in Kuala Lumpur.

On Nov 30, 2021, the government agreed to maintain May 29 each year as National Journalists Day.

Ismail Sabri also spoke about the need to have a Malaysian centre for the study of journalism to boost the level of professionalism in the country. In making the recommendation, he said the centre could collect reference data from various studies conducted to strengthen journalism in Malaysia.

"I hope academics and researchers can benefit from this centre and conduct historical research (on) how journalism evolved in Malaysia and the South-East Asian region," he said.

He also urged for a Malaysian journalists association to be created to represent the print and online media in the country.

This was to ensure the preservation of ethics and professionalism among journalists and to ensure their welfare.