

# PM: Media free to criticise the govt

Due to changing times, they should get freedom without censorship, says Anwar

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**IPOH:** The media should be free to criticise the government without fear or favour, says Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, signalling his administration's departure from the past where journalists faced suppression from the authorities.

"Due to the changing times and political climate, this government has decided that the media in this country should get freedom without censorship," the Prime Minister said in his address at the 2023 National Journalists' Day (Hawana) celebration yesterday.

Anwar mentioned *The Star* newspaper, whose printing permit was rescinded by the Home Ministry in October 1987 at the start of the Ops Lalang crackdown against critics of the then-administration.

"The media are responsible for shaping the public's view. There was a time when *The Star* was banned because it tried to criticise (the government).

"Journalists forge ideas, spark the spirit of independence and sow the seeds of enlightenment," he said.

The old culture of courting the ruling government by writing favourably about it should be stopped and coverage should also be extended to Opposition parties.

"Criticisms against the Prime Minister and the government should be voiced out without fear," he said during the Hawana summit at the Casuarina Convention Centre here yesterday.

This year's celebration is themed "Media Bebas, Tunjang Demokrasi" (Free Media, Pillar of Democracy).

However, Anwar warned that greater press freedom does not include the liberty to spark racial and religious tensions.



**Future is here:** Anwar launching the 2023 National Journalists' Day celebration with a robot. With him at the Ipoh event are (from left) Fahmi, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi, Perak Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Saarani Mohamad and Bernama chief executive officer Roslan Ariffin. - RONNIE CHIN/The Star

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"If there are any criticisms against the government, we should accept them and try to fix the problems.

"However, this doesn't include sparking racist and religious issues that may destroy the unity of the people," he added.

Anwar said young journalists should be trained to spark ideas and convey values.

"Young journalists should also be trained not only about principles but also on the history of the people and the country.

"The struggle by journalists who have ideas, principles and



values is not easy. That is why Hawana is a form of appreciation towards them," he said.

Earlier, Communications and

Digital Minister Fahmi Fadzil said Malaysia needs media organisations that are independent and brave enough to speak out with-



HARI WARTAWAN NASIONAL PERAK  
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out fear or favour.

The media not only needs to be a check and balance to the government but to also ensure that minority voices are heard, recorded and reported, he said.

Fahmi pointed to the fact that Malaysia had recently placed 73rd on the World Press Freedom Index, the highest the country has achieved in history.

"But this position should not be taken for granted; there's a lot of work to be done," he said in his opening remarks at the Hawana 2023 Media Forum here yesterday.

Fahmi added that he hopes members of the media would be able to think and hold conversations and discussions that will broaden horizons and carry on with what needs to be done for the future of this industry.

Themed "The Future of Media", the forum was jointly organised by the Malaysian National News Agency (Bernama) and the Institute of Broadcasting and Information Tun Abdul Razak in conjunction with the three-day Hawana 2023, which ends today.

**Veteran honoured:** Cartoonist Datuk Mohd Nor Khalid, or better known as Lat, with the Hawana Award 2023 he received at the event. - Bernama