

NATIONAL JOURNALISTS DAY

'MEDIA FREEDOM VITAL, BUT THERE ARE LIMITS'

You can criticise PM or govt, but don't incite hatred based on race, religion and royalty, says Anwar

IYLIA MARSYA ISKANDAR
AND FUAD NIZAM
KUALA LUMPUR
news@nst.com.my

WHILE Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim wishes to be a prime minister who upholds media freedom, he feels there is a need to draw the line when it comes to issues that could incite hatred based on race, religion and royalty.

In his closing speech at the National Journalists Day (Hawana) celebration in Kuching, Sarawak, Anwar said while people could criticise or disagree with the government, they must not incite hatred against royalty or promote religious fanaticism.

He acknowledged that a free media was needed to achieve a mature democracy.

"I want to become a prime minister who upholds a free media, but we have to draw the line (somewhere). While you are permitted to criticise or disagree with the prime minister or the government, you can't incite hatred based on race, royalty or religious fanaticism.

"There was a recent incident where His Majesty Sultan Ibrahim, King of Malaysia was criticised.

"Then there was insinuation that the king is negotiating with the prime minister to build a casino in Forest City, partly owned by the king. However, there was no basis for this claim.

"We want to protect the institution. There must be a mechanism to protect the royal institution.

"The king is supposed to embody the national spirit, be the fountain of mercy and a symbol of unity. Therefore, you can't drag him into the mud of politics."

He said religious fanaticism, such as the fatwa from a party's religious scholar saying Muslims cannot vote for non-Muslims, would "destroy the country".

"Do you accept a fatwa from a so-called scholar from a party saying that Muslims cannot support the election of non-Muslims?



Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim launching the National Journalists Day celebration in Kuching yesterday. Present are (from left) Bernama chairman Datuk Seri Wong Chun Wai, Sarawak Premier Tan Sri Abang Johari Openg, Communications Minister Fahmi Fadzil and Deputy Minister in the Sarawak Premier's Department (Corporate Affairs, Information and Sarawak Public Communication) Datuk Abdullah Saidol. BERNAMA PIC

Of course you cannot. It will destroy the country.

"We will not tolerate this as it will break the foundation of this country.

"Don't confuse this issue with media freedom. You can use the media to explain, but you are inciting so much hatred.

"Saying Muslims cannot vote for non-Muslims is not acceptable in this country and we will not allow this."

Hawana's theme is "Etika Teras Kewartawanan Mampan" and runs from May 25 to 27.

It is organised by the Communications Ministry in collaboration with the Sarawak government, with Bernama as the implementing agency.

Bernama reported that Anwar announced an allocation of RM1 million for the Bernama Centre for Excellence to organise courses and training related to artificial intelligence (AI) for media practitioners.

He said the allocation was in line with the call for the media industry to master the use of tech, including AI, in their work.

"We ask Bernama to coordinate activities. The Bernama Centre for Excellence has been asked to expand courses and training, especially in AI, for media practitioners," he said at the Hawana celebration.

Present were Sarawak Premier Tan Sri Abang Johari Openg, Sarawak Deputy Premiers Datuk Douglas Uggah Embas and Datuk Dr Sim Kui Hian, Deputy Minister in the Sarawak Premier's Department (Corporate Affairs, Infor-

mation and Sarawak Public Communication) Datuk Abdullah Saidol, Communications Minister Fahmi Fadzil and his deputy, Teo Nie Ching.

Also present were Bernama chairman Datuk Seri Wong Chun Wai, chief executive officer Nurul Afida Kamaludin and editor-in-chief Arul Rajoo Durar Raj.

The agency's Centre for Excellence is responsible for providing training programmes for its staff and government agencies and corporate entities, in addition to managing applications from students of higher learning institutions to undergo industrial training at the organisation.

The government's commitment to developing the AI ecosystem is being realised through initiatives like the "AI Untuk Rakyat" programme, aimed at increasing awareness about the technology, as well as the AI Sandbox 2024 event, which targets the creation of 900 AI startups and 13,000 new talent by 2026.

Anwar also launched the AI Talent Roadmap for Malaysia 2024-2030, the Faculty of AI at Universiti Teknologi Malaysia and the Malaysia AI Consortium.

Hawana saw the participation of representatives from associations, journalists clubs and journalists from Singapore, Indonesia, the Philippines, Brunei, Vietnam, Cambodia, Timor Leste, China, South Korea, Qatar, France and Kuwait.

National Journalists Day is marked on May 29 to celebrate the contributions of media practitioners.