

More power in the hands of media

MMC tasked with giving suggestions to Cabinet that will enhance press freedom

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PUTRAJAYA: The Malaysian Media Council (MMC) has been tasked to come up with suggestions to the Cabinet to address laws which govern the media industry.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said the council, which regulates the local media industry among other things, has an important role to play in strengthening media freedom in the country.

"The MMC has a task to advise specific legislations or provisions that limit freedom.

"Convey this to the Cabinet and Datuk Fahmi Fadzil (Communications Minister) to take the recommendations up," said Anwar during a briefing with editors-in-chief of media

companies and senior journalists at Seri Perdana yesterday.

He also said the newly-established MMC will advise the government on ways to enhance media freedom.

"Not the Home Ministry but let the MMC advise us on what is the line that should be drawn," he said.

Among existing laws which govern the media are the Printing Presses and Publications Act, the Communications and Multimedia Act, the Sedition Act and the Official Secrets Act, among others.

The Malaysian Media Council Bill 2024 was passed in the Dewan Rakyat on Feb 26.

Meanwhile, Anwar said the government will take firmer steps from next year to address sensitive and controversial issues such as those related to language and race.

"The time has come for us to move forward more boldly. Delayed issues considered sensitive or controversial must be confronted with firmness and courage.

"This includes the enforcement agencies' effectiveness and decisiveness in taking action as well as ensuring that regulatory processes are complied with," he said.

On issues of race, language and economy, the Prime Minister said the government must respond more firmly.

"We cannot play on racial and religious sentiments until they hinder the nation's progress."

Anwar said the government remains committed to strengthening Bahasa Melayu as the national language while recognising the importance of English and other languages.

He said the Unified Examination

Certificate (UEC) issue has been frequently politicised despite his consistent position on the matter.

"Respect the need to understand our history and language. Then you can have the UEC, I have no problem with that," he said.

Anwar also ruled out any possibility of holding a snap general election next year, saying that his priority now is to implement reforms and to address the rising cost of living faced by the people.

"The election still has a long way to go. I have not thought about it.

"I am focusing on how we continue to implement reforms and alleviate the problems people face," he said.

Earlier, Anwar called on Cabinet members to continue working with discipline to ensure the swift implementation of policies under

the Madani government.

"I expect all ministers to serve with humility and integrity, and to engage with the people without delay or excuses.

"This is a Cabinet that continues the will of the people, bearing a great trust that demands immediate action, bold decisions and the ability to translate the aspirations and conscience of all levels of society into policies that work and are felt, not merely rhetoric," he said in a Facebook post.

He also shared several photos of the Cabinet meeting held after the presentation of appointment letters, as well as the oath-taking of office, allegiance and secrecy by federal ministers and deputy ministers at Istana Negara.

This marked the first meeting of the government's new Cabinet line-up following the reshuffle on Tuesday.