

Undilah video taken off-air over Ku Li speech, opposition figures
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KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 23 — A video promoting the right to vote has been taken off the air by local broadcasters despite a push for greater democracy because it contains opposition figures and Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah's speech talking about Malaysia having problems.

The Malaysian Insider learnt that the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC) directed local broadcasters this week not to use the public service announcement (PSA) produced by musician Pete Teo just days after its launch on September 16.

"MCMC emailed both Astro and Media Prima Bhd about the issue, telling them the video clip should not be aired because Ku Li speaks about the country having problems and also because it features opposition leaders," an industry source told The Malaysian Insider, referring to Tengku Razaleigh by his popular nickname.

Teo said the move not to play the video is fundamentally undemocratic in intention. —
Picture by Jack Ooi

"Only NTV7 used it but the MCMC email was sent to both organisations which control the majority of television channels in the country," the source added.

A government source confirmed that MCMC sent the email to Media Prima, which is linked to Umno and owns the NTV7 channel, and Astro, the direct broadcast satellite pay-television service.

"The email about the PSA was sent this week," the source said, adding he was puzzled about the directive as it referred to Tengku Razaleigh, who happens to be the Gua Musang MP for the ruling Barisan Nasional (BN) government.

The MCMC is an independent regulator but it reports to Information, Communication and Culture Minister Datuk Seri Rais Yatim, who was incidentally the Kelantan prince's comrade in Semangat 46 before the party was dissolved for the politicians to join Umno Baru, the successor party to the original Umno that was declared illegal in 1988.

Apart from Tengku Razaleigh, the 4.38-minute video also features Deputy Education Minister Datuk Dr Wee Ka Siong, Deputy Health Minister Datuk Rosnah Abd Rashid Shirlin and opposition figures Petaling Jaya Utara MP Tony Pua, Lembah Pantai MP Nurul Izzah Anwar, Shah Alam MP Khalid Samad and Seri Setia assemblyman Nik Nazmi Nik Ahmad.

Teo, who produced the independent video as a voluntary project, said the alleged directive was "disturbing" as it went against Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak's latest announcement to loosen media control and strengthen civil liberties in the country.

Najib had announced on September 15, the eve of Malaysia Day, that his administration would repeal several security laws including the Internal Security Act (ISA) and review media laws to bring about more democracy in the country.

Teo said Tengku Razaleigh's comments that Malaysia has problems, such as rising cost of living, brain drain, corruption, worsening ethnic relations, declining economic competitiveness, et cetera, was "a commonly acknowledged fact even within the government, let alone among the rakyat".

"Any objection to the mentioning of 'problems' not only flies in the face of reality, it also implicitly denies the need for reform, including those initiated by the PM.

"I think it'd be more constructive if people in authority would help seek solutions to these commonly-known problems rather than try to limit the viewership of our PSA video for mentioning them," Teo told The Malaysian Insider.

He also responded to the "apparent objection" to the equal representation to Pakatan Rakyat (PR) figures as well as their BN counterparts by saying that "the rakyat's interest is best served by being offered a choice between competing parties at the ballot box".

"I believe our unbiased representation of both the government and the opposition honours this crucial idea. Thus, a move to put pressure on broadcasters not to play our non-partisan public service video because it contains opposition figures is fundamentally undemocratic in intention.

"Further, it also goes against the PM's recent announcement to loosen media control and strengthen civil liberties in the country. For this to happen so soon after the PM's historic announcement is very disturbing," he added.

Teo disclosed that the video clip at www.undilah.com has seen just under 300,000 views on the video-sharing site YouTube for all four language subtitled versions since the launch last Friday.

"I am very pleased to have done this sort of numbers despite the difficult release conditions. Anyway, the plan was to massively increase (on-site, broadcast and print) publicity in the coming week so we can get more people to see it, but I guess that might be more complicated now." he said.

Teo confirmed that NTV7 ran the video clip for the first three days of the release and a special interview with those involved, rapper Namewee, actor Afdlin Shauki, director Benji Lim and himself.

"To date, no other broadcaster has committed to broadcasting it, although one has expressed interest. Am not sure if the interest still holds," said the musician behind the successful 15Malaysia project that featured short films last year.

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