

Stop fiddling with balanced reports, NUJ tells editors-in-chief
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By Melissa Chi

KUALA LUMPUR, March 3 – The National Union of Journalists (NUJ) urged editors-in-chief today to stop changing unnecessarily reporters' work to present the lopsided views of media owners, following complaints from members.

It advised too its members to stand up to biased bosses in the organisation. An overwhelming number of mainstream media houses are controlled by political parties in the ruling Barisan Nasional (BN) coalition.

The 1,500-strong union represent reporters who work for, among others, Umno-owned Utusan Malaysia and New Straits Times; MCA-controlled The Star and Chinese-language papers Sin Chew Daily, Nanyang Siang Pau and Kwong Wah Yit Poh and also The Sun.

"We hope that every member of the media will persuade their employer to practice ethical reporting, especially during elections (sic).

"Let the people consume the news and make an informed choice," NUJ general secretary V. Anbalagan said after an extraordinary delegates conference (EDC) today.

A total of 68 delegates had earlier voted unanimously to send a memorandum to all the editors-in-chief reminding them to be balanced in publishing reports.

"It is hereby resolved that members on duty during the general election undertake to subscribe to fair reporting, which is also in line with NUJ Code of Ethics and endeavour to ensure that balanced reports are published," today's resolution read.

Anbalagan said its top leadership will present a memorandum to its members' editors-in-chief "as soon as possible".

"We must (be) seen to be neutral, ask your editor to remove your byline if you don't agree with how your story turned out (after being edited to misrepresent the actual news story)," one delegate urged the rest.

However, several other delegates pointed out that while NUJ is encouraging its members to stand up to its editors, they claimed that the union did not show its support when former president Mohamed Hata Wahari was sacked last year.

Hata was sacked by Utusan Malaysia on April 21, 2011 a week after the paper's disciplinary inquiry said he was guilty of breaching the terms of his contract.

He was terminated from his senior journalist post for making remarks critical of the Umno-owned newspaper's editorial slant.

Today, one delegate said that while journalists in Malaysia want to be free and independent, in reality, most media are controlled by politics.

Anbalagan told reporters after the EDC it is important to safeguard the integrity of journalists.

"The expectations of the public is very high and the people can compare news (from various sources).

"They have raised the bar so we have to fulfill their needs.

"I believe that the public and the readers understand that we are taking a certain stance and if the media owners do not support us, then I believe they will lose their consumer power," he said.

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