

'Govt-bashing portals proof of media freedom'

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PERCEPTION: News portals, publications that criticise govt show there's no media restriction, says Muhyiddin

KUALA LUMPUR: THE perception that the government restricted media freedom was not true, said Deputy Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin yesterday.

"If there is no media freedom, how can so many opposition portals and publications that largely criticise and distort the truth, and bash the government by publishing reports without verifying the facts exist?" he said in his speech at the Malaysian Press Institute-Petronas Eminent Journalist Award presentation held here yesterday.

Muhyiddin added that the government had taken steps to transform the media industry by abolishing the need for yearly permit renewals for the print media under the Print and Publishing Act 1984 and the formation of a media council to self-regulate the media industry.

He said the government was always ready to create a conducive environment to allow journalists and the media to continue playing their role in the growth of democracy in the country.

Muhyiddin also said the rapidly changing media sphere in the era of information technology had given birth to a new generation of citizen journalists.

"Anyone can become a journalist in the Internet era, but to me, this category of journalists is different from the professionals working full-time in the print, electronic or online media," he said, adding that professional journalists stayed true to journalism ethics in gathering and disseminating information.

"Professional journalists cannot write reports based on rumours or coffee-shop talks. The staple food for them are facts and first-hand information based on truth and verified facts."

On the award presented to prolific writer and blogger Datuk A. Kadir Jasin, Muhyiddin said a true journalist never retired.

He congratulated Kadir for his 43 years of contribution to the journalism field.

Past recipients of the award include Tan Sri A. Samad Ismail (1988), Tun Mohamed Fuad Stephens (1998) and Tan Sri Zainuddin Maidin (2006).

"It is hoped that Kadir, just as the other recipients of the award before him, will become an inspiration for the new generation of journalists in creating equal or better achievements in the future," he said.

Also present were Deputy Information, Communications and Culture Minister Datuk Joseph Salang Gandum, MPI chief executive Datuk Chamil Wariya and Petronas media communications general manager Abdul Rahim Mydin.

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