

Muhyiddin: Malaysia practises media freedom
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PETALING JAYA: The assumption that the Government stifles media freedom in the country is untrue, said Deputy Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin.

He said such allegations did not hold water considering the availability of numerous online news portals and Opposition newspapers that are critical of the Government.

"The Government is constantly working towards creating a conducive climate that allows journalists and the media to play their role in building a healthy democracy," he said at the National Journalism Laureate Award ceremony at a hotel here yesterday.

Muhyiddin cited the move to do away with the need to renew printing permits under the Printing Presses and Publications Act 1984 and the proposed establishment of a self-regulatory Malaysian Media Council as examples.

However, he noted that there was no country in the world that practises absolute media freedom and said critics should take into account Malaysia's multiracial society with its diverse religions and cultures.

Muhyiddin later presented the 9th National Journalism Laureate Award to former *New Straits Times* group chief editor Datuk A. Kadir Jasin.

Speaking to the media later, Kadir said he supported the move to form the media council despite misgivings from certain quarters.

He said the initial idea for such a council was mooted by editors from the news industry amid concerns over issues of power and independence.

"There seems to be an impasse and if no attempt is made, we would probably never be able to form one," he said.

Kadir urged the government to continue with efforts to set up such a council.

"As long as the media is well represented, I believe the council will be useful," he said.

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