

Opposition already has equal media access, says Shabery
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By Zurairi AR

PUTRAJAYA, May 20 — Datuk Seri Ahmad Shabery Cheek rubbished claims that the opposition has unequal access to the media, saying today that the new media is already available to them.

“Actually this has been proven to be untrue,” said Shabery, the minister of communications and multimedia in Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak’s new Cabinet, referring to claims of an unequal media access to Pakatan Rakyat (PR). Shabery took over from Datuk Seri Dr Rais Yatim.

“The role of mass media is becoming more limited, but new media is a growing media and can be used by anybody,” Shabery (picture) added.

He disagreed when asked about the lack of fair and even coverage of the opposition in state media such as the public-funded television and radio station RTM.

“For me, it’s not about the opposition or the government ... What is important is the people, not about leaders against leaders,” he said, promising more coverage for community events and issues rather than concentrating on politicians.

Earlier today, Rais handed over his portfolio in the ministry, formerly known as Ministry of Information, Communication and Culture, to Shabery and Datuk Seri Nazri Abd Aziz, the new minister of tourism and culture.

According to Shabery, “information” was dropped from the ministry’s new name because it was an archaic government role from the time when government dictated matters from top down.

Before Election 2013, PR had previously snubbed the offer by Rais to make its pitch to voters through a 10-minute block on RTM.

Leaders from the opposition pact said it had wanted the right of reply, not only during the general election, but at all times in all of the mainstream media and TV stations, almost all of which are BN-controlled.

Early this month, think-tanks Institute for Democracy and Economic Affairs (IDEAS) and the Centre for Public Policy Studies (CPPS) concluded that Election 2013 was “partially free but not fair”, resulting from among others media with a heavy bias towards ruling coalition Barisan Nasional (BN).

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