

US concerned about freedom of expression in Malaysia
The Malaysian Insider
August 6, 2015
By Sheridan Mahavera

The United States has expressed concern about the state of freedom of expression in Malaysia, as members of the Najib administration announced changes to laws on Internet content and a clampdown on independent media.

US Secretary of State John Kerry said he had spoken to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak on the imprisonment of former Opposition leader Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

"I raised concerns about freedom of expression and spoke about Anwar Ibrahim's situation," Kerry told the media in Kuala Lumpur today at the end of his official visit to Malaysia.

Kerry's visit to Malaysia coincides with the recent suspension of business weekly The Edge Malaysia and blocking of whistle blower site Sarawak Report, both of which have been unrelenting in their exposes of troubled state investor 1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB).

Civil society groups have claimed that the Najib administration is suppressing its critics, especially after allegations first surfaced in early July that RM2.6 billion had been funnelled into his personal accounts.

Soon after being sworn in as the new Communications and Multimedia Minister, Datuk Seri Dr Salleh Said Keruak said the law on internet content will be amended to make publishing false news a crime.

This was in response to claims by the Najib administration of fake evidence being spread online about 1MDB and the funds transfer scandal.

At about the same time, newly-minted Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Ahmad Zahid Hamidi also stated that he will come down without warning on media "spin".

Kerry, however, did not elaborate on the substance of his discussions with Najib on freedom of expression or on Anwar's case.

Anwar is serving a five-year jail sentence after being convicted of sodomising a former aide, a charge which Opposition parties claim is politically-motivated.

Kerry said he also spoke to Najib and Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Anifah Aman about concrete steps Malaysia should take to tackle human trafficking.

"The (Malaysian) government spoke about the steps it was taking to meet minimum standards and we spoke about how we could do more." – August 6, 2015.

Copyright © 2015 Edge Insider Sdn Bhd

Source:

<http://www.themalaysianinsider.com/malaysia/article/us-concerned-about-freedom-of-expression-in-malaysia>