

The dust has settled, RTM vindicated

BERNAMA

23/02/2019

By Voon Miaw Ping

KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 23 (Bernama) -- The dust has now settled with Communications and Multimedia Minister Gobind Singh Deo clearing RTM of any fault after the broadcaster was taken to task for failing to broadcast live the delivery of speeches of certain leaders at the national-level Chinese New Year open house in Seremban on Sunday.

The episode began unravelling after Transport Minister Anthony Loke's press secretary Lim Swee Kuan ranted on Facebook asking whether RTM was sabotaging the government and remarked that "heads must roll in RTM".

Lim also said that an official letter would be sent to Communications and Multimedia Minister Gobind Singh Deo on the matter.

This came after RTM did not broadcast live the speeches by Loke and Negri Sembilan Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Aminuddin Harun at the event, except for Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad's speech.

Also present at the event was Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail.

Gobind took up the matter immediately and requested RTM to submit a report and list down its Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) in handling requests for the station to cover an event.

On Thursday, after gleaning through the report, Gobind cleared RTM of any fault after finding that the broadcaster had adhered to the SOP by broadcasting only the delivery of speeches by the prime minister in any event also attended by ministers and menteriis besar.

However, Gobind also stated that the delivery of speeches of other ministers could be aired live if a request was made to RTM, but in this case, there was no such request.

It is a vindication for the 73-year-old state-owned TV station over the unwarranted criticism, but Lim's antic was seen inappropriate by the media fraternity and had sparked debate on whether it was an infringement on media freedom.

Malaysian National News Agency (BERNAMA) chairman Datuk Seri Azman Ujang said Bernama and its TV channel, Bernama News Channel, also applied the same SOP when it comes to live broadcast.

He said like RTM, only the delivery of the prime minister and the Yang di-Pertuan Agong's speeches would be aired live.

"That should be the way. Live telecast is not for everyone, and it is only for the most important person at the event. Moreover, live broadcast is very costly," Azman said.

He said that in this case, the press secretary should understand his responsibility and the nature of the situation, thus helping to prevent such inappropriate statements.

Azman also commended Gobind for dealing with the issue professionally and keeping the issue under control until RTM presented its side of the story before delivering the verdict.

Perhaps this approach should also be applied by those working with the media, including press secretaries to seek clarity and understand the matter at hand before losing one's cool too quickly and berating about it, so that he/she won't be mired in any embarrassing situation in future.

Meanwhile, Universiti Putra Malaysia's Senior Communication lecturer Dr Syed Agil Syed Alsagoff noted that RTM's procedure on live broadcast was not something new as in other

countries, including in Singapore, only the delivery of speech of the most prominent leader in the event would be broadcast live.

“It was not the first time that only the prime minister's speech was aired by RTM, it had happened many times before.

“In the event where several ministers including the prime minister are expected to deliver their speeches, only the delivery of the prime minister's speech will be aired live because a prime minister is the topmost leader than the rest.

“Unless a foreign prime minister is present together with our prime minister, then speeches by both leaders would be aired live,” he told Bernama.

He said, from the journalistic perspective, the content of the prime minister's speech would definitely carry more weight and have more news value than that of other ministers at the same event.

“Besides, live broadcast is costly, so if the delivery of all speeches were to be broadcast live, it would waste the airtime, which in turn means loss of revenue. So the broadcaster will definitely choose the most important speech,” he added.

-- BERNAMA

© 2018 BERNAMA. All Rights Reserved. Disclaimer | Privacy Policy| Security Policy

Source: <http://www.bernama.com/en/news.php?id=1697806>