

Intimidation against RTM by Press Secretary Unwarranted and Detrimental to Media Freedom

Suara Rakyat Malaysia (SUARAM) welcomes the direction adopted by Minister for Communication and Multimedia, YB Gobind Singh on the complaints surrounding the failure to air minister speeches by RTM.

In the past, the public's trust in RTM and its contents were eroded due to decades of political patronage and biasedness towards the political power of the day. If RTM were to regain public trust and serve the needs of all Malaysians, it must be allowed to operate independently and be free from all political interference by the executive.

The commentary by Lim Swee Kuan against RTM is ill-conceived and concerning. Any inadequacies or flaws contained within RTM operating procedures can be reviewed and rectified as necessary. Whereas misconducts and mistakes must be addressed through appropriate channels with the necessary due process. If RTM merely followed its SOP on the matter, the complainant who represents the executive effectively demanded action to be taken against RTM without a clear understanding of the underlying processes. Such behavior would only serve to curtail media freedom and portray Pakatan Harapan in the same light as its predecessor.

SUARAM welcomes the minister response where RTM was given an opportunity to put forward its side of the story and defend itself. The acknowledgement of media freedom and the potential ramification to media freedom that may result from any intervention or query from his office is an important development for freedom of expression.

While the approach by minister is commendable, SUARAM must caution that such actions should only be used as a short-term solution. In the long term, an independent media council is the best platform to address such concerns. Pending the introduction of a media council, the Ministry should consider establishing a pro tem committee to review such disputes to ensure that media freedom is not eroded by selected members of Pakatan Harapan administration that fails to appreciate its importance of media freedom.

In Solidarity
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SUARAM