

March 31, 2015

TO ALL NEWS EDITORS,

PRESS STATEMENT FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The National Union of Journalists Peninsular Malaysia (NUJ) strongly condemns the detainment of The Edge publisher Ho Kay Tat and The Malaysian Insider chief executive Jahabar Sadiq by police this morning under Section 233 of the Communications and Multimedia Act and Section 4 of the Sedition Act over the news portal's report on Islamic criminal laws or hudud.

Earlier yesterday, the police also detained Malaysian Insider managing editor Lionel Morais, Bahasa news editor Amin Shah Iskandar and features and analysis editor Zulkifli Sulong under the same Acts. This brings the number of arrests of media personnel to five from the The Edge Media Group: four editors and one director.

The NUJ echoes the statement by Ho Kay Tat, the Group CEO/Publisher of The Edge Media Group over the arrests being unnecessary as they can meet the police any time to have their statements taken.

According to Ho, they were cooperating fully with the police officers and investigators from Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission but could not convince them that there was no necessity to take the three editors to the police lock up for the night.

The raid follows a police report lodged against TMI by officials from the Conference of Rulers. Even while the investigation could be continued until such there is reason enough for their detainment, the police should not have made the arrest

The editors are detained at the Dang Wangi headquarters, and will be brought before a magistrate for a remand hearing today.

The editors were merely doing their job as journalists. This action does not augur well for the Government's promise to allow the Malaysian media to operate freely and without fear of their reporters being detained under questionable reasoning.

Even though the Police has the right to question anyone through complaints made by certain groups, we however strongly feel that the Sedition Act had been wrongly applied on the editors' case.

The use of the relevant Act by intimidating the media had been on the rise of late and it has never been accepted by the local media nor been supported by the general public. The union believes the police, by invoking the Sedition Act to investigate journalists is regarded as a means to intimidate and interfere with press freedom.

NUJ believes all journalists have the right to share insights into cases with the public's interest at hand, to convey public opinion and that the reporter reports not of their own comments. The Government or any law enforcement authorities must act convincingly in this matter and restore its credibility in the eyes of the public and media fraternity and not act in a high-handed manner.

NUJ calls for the immediate release of the Edge Publisher Ho Kay Tat and Malaysian Insider's CEO Jahabar Sadiq together with TMI's editors and a cessation of the authorities' capricious crackdown on the freedom of expression.

Yours sincerely,



SCHAVE JEROME DE ROZARIO

General Secretary NUJ