

Communications Ministry: Media Council draft bill to the Cabinet this year

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KUALA LUMPUR: The Communications and Digital Ministry plans to forward the Media Council draft bill to the Cabinet for a decision later this year, for it to be tabled in the next parliamentary sitting for the first reading.

Its deputy secretary-general (Strategic Communications and Creative Industries) Mastura Ahmad Mustafa said the ministry expects the pro-tem Malaysian Media Council committee members to revert their feedback in two weeks.

"We expect Malaysian Press Institute chief executive officer, Datuk Dr Chamil Wariya (as one of the representatives) to revert with the counter-feedback in two weeks.

"If both parties are able to agree on the finalised draft bill, we target that by August or September this year. The draft bill will go to the Cabinet for a decision and if the Cabinet is agreeable, it can be tabled at the next parliamentary sitting for the first reading," she told Bernama when met today.

She was speaking in the discussion on 'The Crucial Roles of the Malaysian Media Council' as a panelist of the World Press Freedom Day (WPFDD) Forum 2023 here, today.

Besides Mastura and Chamil, other panellists of the discussion include the media council committee's representative for Sabah and Sarawak S.S. Yoga; Centre for Independent Journalism (CIJ Malaysia) executive director Wathshlah Naidu; Prof Zaharom Nain, Media and Communication Studies, University of Nottingham Malaysia and Malaysiakini journalist Aidila Razak.

The discussion saw various topics pertaining to the media council's establishment and functions being addressed, such as the media council's funding sources, press freedom, as well as laws and regulations involving the press.

"There are actually two expectations by the government on the media council... first, in regards to challenges and issues in facing ever-developing technology, there is a (growing) demand for ethical, responsible and trustworthy media for the public.

"That is what we expect the media council to deliver not only to the government but also news consumers.

"Secondly, we would also like the media to become a platform for the public to express their grievances should they have a complaint against media practitioners," Mastura said.

She added it is conducive to have a platform such as the media council and at the same time, media practitioners are to be held accountable for what is published and disseminated to the public. -- Bernama