

HAWANA Highlights Government's Appreciation for Media's Role as Information Bridge

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- >> General

Hawana: National Journalists' Day (HAWANA), celebrated annually on May 29, reflects the government's appreciation for media practitioners who serve as the primary information bridge between the administration and the people. Far from being just a fixture on the industry calendar, the HAWANA platform recognises these unsung heroes who uphold public trust by delivering real facts, while acting as credible conduits for government policies and the pulse of the community.

According to BERNAMA News Agency, the highlight of the HAWANA 2026 celebration will be held at the PICCA Convention Centre @ Butterworth Arena, Penang, on June 20, and will be officiated by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim. Themed 'Media Integrity Strengthens Credibility', the country's largest media gathering serves as an important arena to strengthen journalistic professionalism amid a challenging communication landscape.

The event is expected to gather about 1,000 local and foreign media practitioners and serve as a strategic platform to spark fresh ideas and shape journalism's future direction. A unique feature of this year's celebration is the special invitation extended to information and communications ministers from ASEAN member countries to attend HAWANA 2026.

Communications Minister Datuk Fahmi Fadzil had previously said that the celebration highlights HAWANA's position as the premier platform for strengthening strategic cooperation within the media industry at both national and regional levels. Although the main event is scheduled for June 20, HAWANA 2026 activities kicked off on May 7 with the HAWANA Media Forum. This was followed by the HAWANA-DBP Pantun Competition on May 9.

The excitement continues with a Session with Strategic Partners on June 4. This is followed by the HAWANA Fun Walk at Titiwangsa Lake Gardens on June 14. Also lined up is the Mai Rihuh@HAWANA programme from June 19 to 21 in Penang, which highlights community inclusivity through the Rahmah Sale and local vendor participation, alongside a Media Dinner with Penang Yang Dipertua Negeri Tun Ramli Ngah Talib on June 19.

HAWANA is celebrated on May 29 annually to commemorate the publication of the first edition of the Utusan Melayu newspaper on May 29, 1939, and to mark appreciation for the services and contributions of media practitioners to nation-building. Organised by the Ministry of Communications, with the Malaysian National News Agency (Bernama) as the implementing agency, HAWANA is the ultimate platform to recognise the contributions, diligence, and professionalism of media practitioners in Malaysia.

Meanwhile, academics describe the role of journalists today as increasingly critical in confronting the threat of fake news, which can disrupt social harmony. Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Communication Programme senior lecturer, Assoc Prof Dr Lee Kuok Tiung said HAWANA is the highest recognition for the sacrifices of journalists, who serve as a bulwark of credible information.

He said that while information channels may change, journalism will remain relevant as public literacy rises. However, it demands that media practitioners consistently engage in reskilling and upskilling. He also said that the presence of Artificial Intelligence (AI) technology requires journalists to hold even more firmly to the core principles of journalism to curb the spread of misinformation generated by such technology.

"The world of journalism will continue to grow because rising literacy among the global population has led to an increasing demand for information sources," he told Bernama.