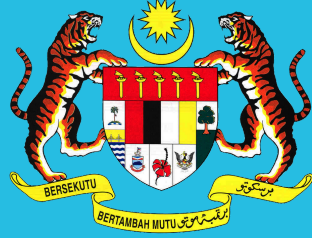


ORGANISED BY:

SUPPORTED BY:



Ministry of Communications and Multimedia

WORLD PRESS FREEDOM DAY.



INFORMATION AS A PUBLIC GOOD

VIRTUAL FORUM
9.00AM - 12 NOON
MAY 3, 2021

zoom



REGISTER FOR ZOOM LINK HERE - <https://tinyurl.com/427s3dup>

WATCH ON YOUTUBE LIVE HERE - <https://youtu.be/4y-nQcYEqYE>

WORLD PRESS FREEDOM DAY 2021 VIRTUAL FORUM: INFORMATION AS A PUBLIC GOOD

Supported by:

Ministry of Communications and Multimedia

Jointly organised by:

The Embassy of the Kingdom of Netherlands

The United Nations in Malaysia

Human Rights Commission of Malaysia (SUHAKAM)

BACKGROUND

May 3 is celebrated worldwide as the World Press Freedom Day. The commemoration serves as a reminder to governments of the need to respect their commitment to press freedom. This is also a day for reflection among media professionals about issues of press freedom and professional ethics.

UNESCO has proposed “information as a public good” as the theme for 2021. The aim is to draw attention to the special role of journalism in producing news as verified information in the public interest and to how this depends on a wider ecosystem that enables information as a public good.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights proclaims the right of everyone "to freedom of opinion and expression and clarifies that this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through media and regardless of frontiers.

The Federal Constitution of Malaysia guarantees every citizen's right to freedom of speech and expression. The right to information is not explicitly mentioned, but this can be considered an integral part of freedom of speech. Without access to information, citizens would not be able to exercise their right to free speech and expression effectively.

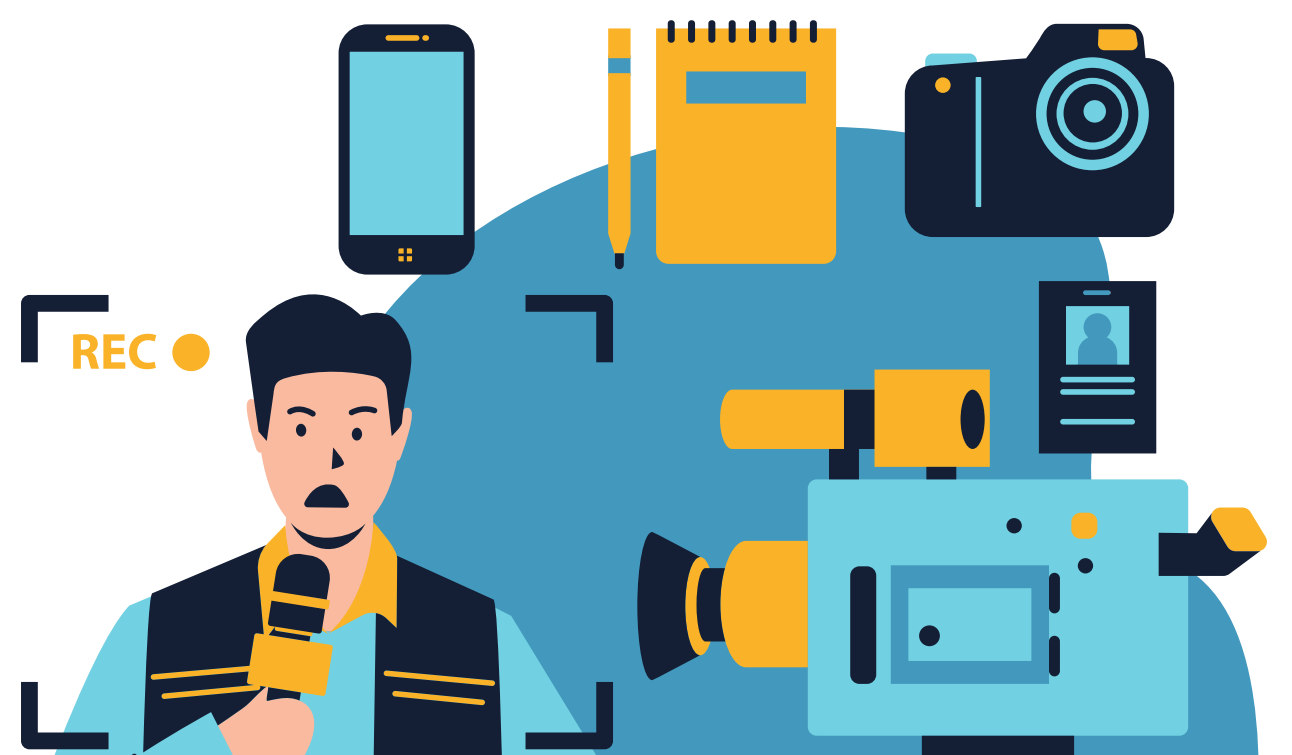
BACKGROUND CONTINUED

Freedom of expression and opinion and free media is the cornerstone of democracy and the rule of law. Broadly media refers to the entities and individuals responsible for producing news, information, education, and entertainment that regularly reach or influence people through various means such as television, print media, radio, internet, and social media.

Media freedom refers to the right to report news or circulate opinion without censorship from the government. Society relies on the news media to describe, explain and monitor every institution of society. Therefore, the media has a great responsibility to be impartial and factual.

Many countries have recognized the freedom of expression as a fundamental right with some restrictions for the public interest. However, the media continue to suffer from undue restrictions, including threats to journalists for criticizing the government. Female journalists face additional challenges including online violence and offline physical abuse. It is also true that the unprecedented reach of social media presents a new challenge. In many places around the world, we are witnessing the proliferation of hate speech and incitement of violence through social and other media which necessitates a strong code of conduct for media persons

In the context of SDGs and its inherent principle of 'leaving no one behind', the media plays a critical role in informing people on national policies and facilitating dialogue between various interest groups, including experts, civil society and readers including youth groups. Media can be a meaningful stakeholder in the quest to meet the SDGs as a wide range of SDG related topics such as non-discrimination, environment, climate change, corruption, the rule of law, access to basic health, education, employment, issues of vulnerable people, among others. Providing citizen with access to information (SDG target 16.10) can be done only through media. The media can also reach out to those left behind and give voice to the voiceless and bring their concerns and issues to public authorities' attention.

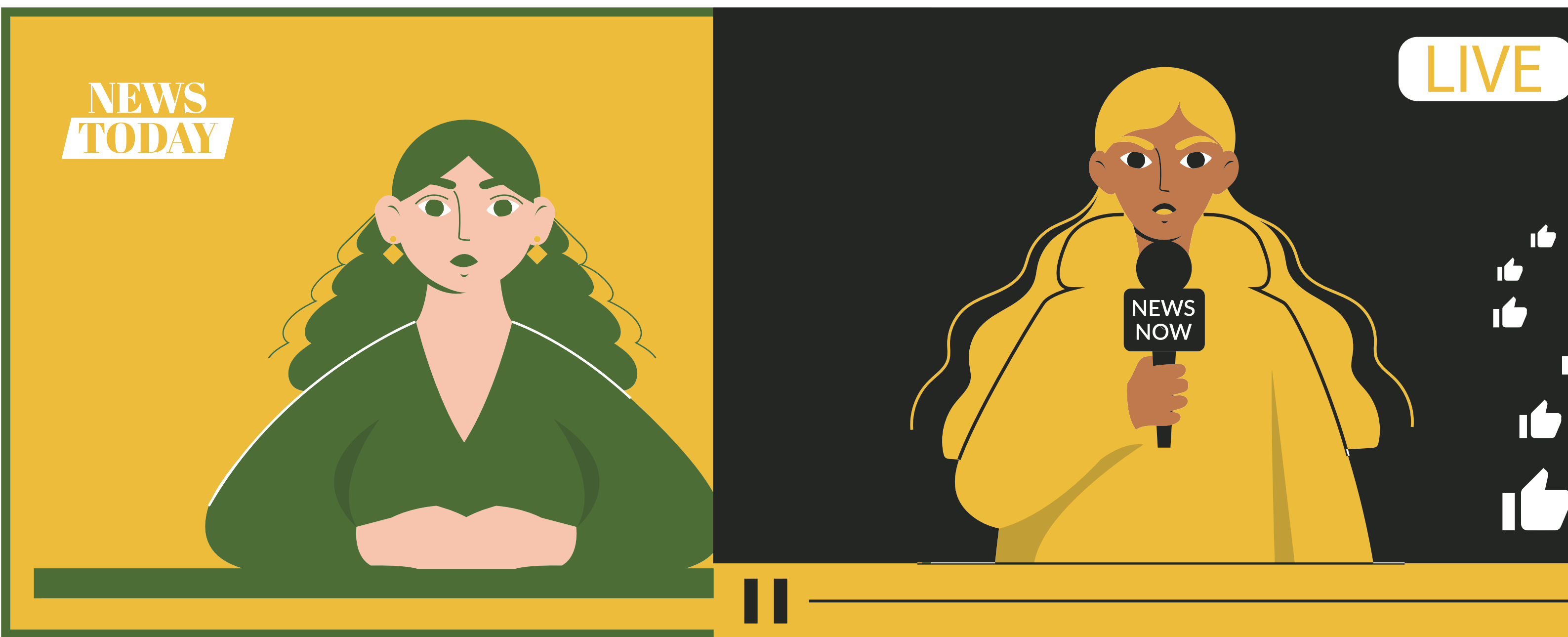


BACKGROUND CONTINUED

Media can play a critical role in promoting accountability concerning government actors. It can monitor the performance of public institutions and expose misconduct, and advocate for change.

COVID-19 brought both challenges and opportunity to the media. The media played a crucial role in disseminating information on beneficial guidelines on COVID-19, including social distancing protocol and other health-related messages. However, information shared without proper verification had unintended consequences, including discrimination against COVID-19 infected persons and incitement for hate speech. In many countries, the pandemic was seen as an opportunity to clamp down on the media, which had a negative impact on the media freedom situation. In the context of COVID-19, the sustainability of media remains a concern as print media all over the world financially suffered.

Malaysia during the third cycle of Universal Periodic Review (UPR) by the Human Rights Council in 2018 recognized the importance of free media in the country, and supported recommendations on review of relevant laws, including the Sedition Act 1948, the Printing Press and Publications Act 1984, the Official Secrets Act 1972, the Film Censorship Act 2002 and reforming Section 233 of the Communications and Multimedia Act of 1998. Some provisions of these laws have posed challenges in protecting the freedom of media. The progress made in drafting the Media Council Act is also encouraging.



OBJECTIVE

WPF 2021 will aim to:

- **Raise awareness regarding the importance of freedom of the media and the right to information.**
- **Highlight the role of youth in media and how media can be a platform for learning and information sharing.**
- **Promote the theme of this year ' information as a public good' and stress on the role of journalists to provide verified information to the public.**
- **Deliberate on media sustainability in the context of COVID 19 pandemic.**

FOCUS AREAS

- **International protection framework for the freedom of media and international human rights obligations of Malaysia.**
- **The present context of media freedom and the right to information in Malaysia and the role of media to give voice to voiceless.**
- **Legal and policy reforms in Malaysia for ensuring media freedom and the right to information, and protection of journalists as human rights defenders.**
- **How can media sustain economically in the age of dwindling print sales- (media houses are asking for payment for articles shared on social media).**
- **Youth and media freedom and right to information**
- **Media ethics- to draw attention to the special role of journalists in producing news as verified information in the public interest and avoid hate contents.**

OPENING SESSION (9.30-10.00AM)



Welcoming Address:

Mr. Stefan Priesner

United Nations Resident
Coordinator for Malaysia,
Singapore and Brunei
Darussalam



Keynote Address:

H.E Aart Jacobi

Ambassador, Embassy of
the Kingdom of the
Netherlands



Keynote Address:

YB Dato' Saifuddin Abdullah

Minister of Communications
and Multimedia

PANEL I: PRESS FREEDOM AND THE RIGHT TO INFORMATION IN THE CONTEXT OF 2030 SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AGENDA. (10.05-11.00AM)



Moderator:

Tehmina Kasooji

Board Member, Institute of
Journalists Malaysia



Mahi Ramakrishnan

Filmmaker and journalist

*The present context of press
freedom and the right to
information in Malaysia and the
role of media to give voice to
voiceless*



Jerald Joseph

Commissioner, SUHAKAM

*International protection
framework for the freedom of
media and Malaysia's
international human rights
obligations*



Dr. Punitha Silivarajoo

Director (Policy section)
Legal Affairs Division (BHEUU),
Prime Minister's Department

*Legal and policy reforms in
Malaysia for ensuring media
freedom and the right to
information*

PANEL II: YOUTH AND PRESS FREEDOM, MEDIA SURVIVAL AND SUSTAINABILITY AND MEDIA ETHICS. (11.00 - 11.55AM)



Moderator:
Premesh Chandran
CEO and co-founder of
Malaysiakini



Jahabar Saddiq
Founder, Malaysian Insight

How can media sustain economically in the age of dwindling print sales



Vinodh Pillai
Media Monitoring and Action
Programme Officer, Centre
for Independent Journalism
(CIJ) Malaysia

*Youth and press freedom and
right to information*



**Assoc. Prof. Dr. Emma Mirza
Wati Mohamad**

Chairperson, Centre for Research
in Media and Communication,
Faculty of Social Sciences and
Humanities, Universiti
Kebangsaan Malaysia

*Media ethics- to draw attention to
the special role of journalists in
producing news as verified
information in the public interest
and avoid hate contents.*

CLOSING SESSION (11.55 - 12.00 NOON)



Closing Remarks by
YBhg. Tan Sri Othman Hashim
Chairman of SUHAKAM

End of Programme



ORGANISED BY:



UNITED NATIONS
MALAYSIA, SINGAPORE,
BRUNEI DARUSSALAM



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HAK ASASI UNTUK SEMUA



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Ministry of Communications
and Multimedia

#WorldPressFreedomDay

#PressFreedom



<https://tinyurl.com/427s3dup>



<https://youtu.be/4y-nQcYEgYE>

