

 PETALING JAYA: The Home Ministry's move to blackout parts of The Economist's article on the Bersih 2.0 rally is an outdated approach in a maturing society, said politicians.

Umno Youth Chief Khairy Jamalud-din said it showed that some of the ministry's procedures were still stuck in a time warp.

I am not sure that is the best approach in this day and age. I am sure this was a bureaucratic decision not sanctioned by the minister and it looks like some procedures are stuck in a time warp and is no longer effective or desirable in a maturing society, he said yesterday.

Khairy said the action might have attracted more attention to the article.

The ministry's Publications Control and Quranic Text Division blacked out parts of the article for what it claimed was incorrect and misleading information.

The article titled 'Taken to the cleaners' an overzealous government response to an Opposition rally chronicles the July 9 rally, including the arrest of about 1,600 people and the firing of tear gas and water cannon into the crowds.

Umno Youth exco Datuk Ahmad Zaki Zahid said it was an outdated move in an age of connectedness and social media.

MCA vice-president Senator Gan Ping Sieu said a more sensible action would be to rebut the allegations deemed misleading or untrue with facts and figures from the police and lodge a complaint against the publisher.

He said blacking out parts of the article when it could be read online would only stir the curiosity of those who normally did not read the magazine.

This would only result in more people learning about the article, thus defeating the ministry's purpose of censoring it in the first place.

All this will only make Malaysia an international laughing stock, he said in a statement.

Gan, who is also the Deputy Youth and Sports Minister, said the authorities should know that this would only invite adverse publicity at a time when Malaysia was battling bad press in the international media following the rally.

The ministry should realise that overzealous censorship is counterproductive and can be perceived as an infringement on the freedom of expression and media interference.

In Bersih 2.0's aftermath, authorities ought to have wised up to the fact that overreaction on their part can fuel public anger. This can sway public sympathy to causes by organisations like the Opposition-backed Bersih 2.0, he said.