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Umno on the offensive against malicious web content with new portal

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KUALA LUMPUR, Sun. - Internet slander-mongers beware. Umno is stepping up its offensive against malicious web content with the unveiling of a new portal later this month.

The website offering services such as e-mail, search engines and links to related websites, is expected to be launched by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

It will offer visitors links to current statements by party leaders and other resources rebutting slanderous comments and articles on the Internet.

Visitors will also be able to communicate with party leaders in online forums and via e-mail.

The move to set up the portal reflects recent statements by party leaders on the need to respond to the proliferation of websites and discussion groups spreading malicious news and rumours concerning the party and the Government.

On Tuesday, Umno secretary-general Tan Sri Khalil Yaakob was quoted as saying that the Government had no intention of censoring the Internet, but would instead use it as a medium to counter the slanderous accusations.

His statement came in the wake of an earlier comment by Dr Mahathir who expressed his disappointment that while others were making good use of the Internet, "in Malaysia we find the Internet is used to disseminate surat layang, not more than that".

The Prime Minister said this on Monday during his visit to Chicago.

A party employee involved in the project said another reason for creating the portal was to enable the party to cope with the increasing traffic on its Berita e-Umno Internet newspaper.

"We have had six million hits (one hit denotes one packet of information contained in a page which a visitor accesses, and a page may contain several packets of information) since the website started operating in April," he said.

The portal has been under construction over the past three weeks and will utilise a high-powered Internet server and wireless application protocol technology.

This would speed up access while enabling users to access the site using WAP-compatible devices such as Personal Digital Assistants and mobile phones.

The source said the Buletin Malaysia website set up by the Prime Minister's Department to counter issues raised by the Government's critics had not been as effective as hoped.

One reason was because the website depended too much on the posting of newspaper articles online rather than providing responses.

Apart from Berita e-Umno (located at <http://www.e-umno.net.my>), the party has its website at <http://www.umno.org.my>.

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