

**Najib: Gov't doesn't fear bloggers, it just wants in
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The government does not fear bloggers but wants to be part of them and know their views even if it is constructive criticism, says Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak.

I believe this relationship will be an important relationship based on mutual respect. We might not agree all the time but we cannot be disagreeable.

"What is important for us is to put forward your (bloggers) views, even your constructive criticism and together we can build a better Malaysia and future for us," he said in his keynote address at the First Malaysia-Asean Regional Bloggers' Conference in Kuala Lumpur today.

Also present were the patron of Blog House Malaysia Dr Mahathir Mohamad (below) and his wife Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali, president of Blog House Malaysia Syed Akbar Ali and Najib's wife Rosmah Mansor.

Najib said the era of government knowing everything was over and the government needed to know from bloggers who represented the Malaysian community, their views and criticism.

"But we should draw the line; if we use the cyberspace to tell lies and half truths, that is wrong. I agree with Tun Dr Mahathir that there must be a line that we cannot trespass."

He said if bloggers worked within those parameters, he believed they could indeed play a vital part in shaping a better future for Malaysia and Asean.

Najib said the governments of today were being challenged not just with the use of guerillas and mercenaries armed to the teeth with deadly weapons, but also by the deployment of cybertroopers who waged viral warfare with the might of their keyboards, keypads and smartphones, as the Iran "Twitter" and Egypt "Facebook" Revolution manifested.

"We are also one of the most ardent Facebook fans - there are 10.1 million FB users. I have no doubt whatsoever that Malaysia has one of the liveliest blogospheres in the world and definitely one of the freest if not the most free.

"Malaysians have to thank Tun Dr Mahathir again for this. When he was prime minister and Malaysia was developing its Multimedia Super Corridor, Tun made the promise to the world that Malaysia would never censor the Internet. My government is fully committed to that wisdom; we intend to keep his word," he said.

Najib believes that the Internet is an engine for economic growth, the portal that opens up to a knowledge society.

"This is applicable to all societies, even a government that is not too keen about the democracy part of 'digital democracy' should embrace the digital part, as the economic implications are simply too great to ignore.

"The social media, blogging and microblogging are capable of bringing nations closer as for the first time in the history of mankind, people are able to communicate with each other in

real time and without having to wait for days or even weeks for the mail," he said.

The two-day conference, starting yesterday with the theme of "Blogging Mindfully and Responsibly" is organised by Blog House Malaysia, an association that provides a platform to derive defensive mechanisms to protect the plethora of bloggers in blogosphere, especially on Malaysia and Malaysia-centric postings.

The objective of this conference is to bring together regional bloggers from the Asean region and to highlight the obstacles faced by these bloggers as well as the adversity that bloggers might experience in their day-to-day tackling of various issues.

- Bernama

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