

MP: Opposition has wider reach via online media
MalaysiaKini.com
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Kota Belud MP Abdul Rahman Dahlan today said it is unfair for the opposition to claim it does not have a level playing field as the online media which it has access to, has a bigger readership than some of the mainstream media.

"I'm telling you right now, there are more people reading Malaysiakini than Utusan isn't it?"

"More people are reading The Malaysian Insider than The Star... that's what people are telling me, it's a level playing field," he said.

According to the Malaysian Digital Association latest statistics, among local news portals, Star Online is ranked first followed by Malaysiakini, Utusan Online, Berita Harian, Kosmo, Harian Metro, The Malaysian Insider and Sin Chew Daily.

However, no statistics is available for comparison between newspapers and news portals. Meanwhile, Google Trends statistics shows Malaysiakini leading the pack.

Abdul Rahman said that as the online media has rapidly developed after the 2008 general election, it too has become mainstream.

Abdul Rahman (right) added that despite the opposition repeatedly calling for equal access to government-owned media, it has failed to walk the talk.

He said this during a debate entitled 'New Politics: Between Freedom and Responsibility' held in conjunction with the National Assembly of Special Affairs Department Officers (Jasa) in Kuala Lumpur today.

"In a smaller scale, they (Pakatan Rakyat) are controlling TV Selangor isn't it? It's funded by the Selangor government... if TV Selangor decides to give half its airtime to BN, then I will believe what they say.

"If you want to ask the BN government for more democratic space, you could do it in your backyard first," he said during the debate which was also attended by PKR's Batu MP Tian Chua and Umno Youth exco member Lokman Noor Adam.

Alternative media deprived of printing permit

Another example, he said, was the opposition's demand to chair the Public Accounts Committee in parliament but it has failed to do the same in Pakatan states.

When countered by Tian Chua (left) that Selangor had offered the position to BN in its state assembly, Abdul Rahman replied: "Because the majority of members in the committee is still from Pakatan, that is why BN rejected."

Tian Chua added that it was acceptable for the party organ to only give coverage to the party but media funded by taxpayers should be open to all, and acknowledged that TV Selangor needed to be improved.

However, he said that despite the government refusing to allow fair space in government-owned media, it is also denying the existence of other media to go on print.

"We accept that Utusan Malaysia is owned by Umno and serves BN, but why Suara Keadilan does not

get a permit? Why when Malaysiakini wanted a printing permit it was rejected?"

Sensationalism fosters discontentment

However, Lokman contended that if the new media was allowed too much space to sensationalise issues, it could create dissatisfaction among society.

"Take the Indonesian media for example, they keep harping on border issues to the extent that its people want to go to war with us," he said.

Lokman (left) claimed that the online media, like the mainstream media, too practised censorship but on pro-government articles.

"Is Malaysiakini a free media? Everytime I comment on their article it is deleted, this shows it is not free," he said.

He also blasted the opposition for constantly criticising the government regardless of the deeds or ills it has done.

"As the federal opposition, it is our job to criticise the weaknesses of the government, like how the opposition in Selangor criticises us," explained Tian Chua.

He added that regardless what the government or opposition say, the people would ultimately be the judge.

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