

**Media consultant launches 'Middle Malaysia' podcast
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Writer and media consultant Oon Yeoh today kicked off a ground-breaking political podcast called 'Middle Malaysia' in the lead-up to the general elections.

"In the past year or so, we've seen some extreme elements trying to pit one community against another," explained Yeoh.

"My hope lies with Middle Malaysia - the ordinary folks who believe in moderation and tolerance, and who reject extremism as completely out of place in this day and age.

"Because certain voices tend to be drowned out in mainstream media, I wanted to create this podcast for Middle Malaysia, so that people can hear from those fighting for positive change in this country," he said.

A podcast is an audio broadcast which can be downloaded from a website to a media player or computer.

In his inaugural 12-minute podcast, Yeoh chats with PKR vice-president and Batu MP Tian Chua (right), who shares his calculations for the upcoming general elections, which show how Pakatan Rakyat can defeat BN.

He also talks about why he has been away from the national spotlight recently and explains the need for Malaysia to do away with race-based politics.

Malaysia's pioneering political blogger

Yeoh, who is arguably one of the country's first political bloggers, believes strongly in new media platforms as a means to get alternative news and views out to the masses.

He launched his 'Transitions' political blog on Malaysiakini on Jan 1, 2003. Yeoh was later joined by another pioneer, Jeff Ooi, who started his 'Screenshots' blog exactly a day later.

Both of them considered each other as sparring partners on the then-nascent blogging scene, often responding to each other's blog and cross-linking each other's postings.

Ooi joined DAP a few years later and was elected member of parliament for the Penang seat of Jelutong in 2008.

Meanwhile, Yeoh (right) went on to pioneer political podcasting, creating a programme called 'Realpolitik' with political analyst Ong Kian Ming, which debuted on Malaysiakini on April 7, 2008.

Since Ong was at the time based in the United State completing his PhD at Duke University, the duo did their podcast recordings via Skype.

The 'Middle Malaysia Podcast' is his Yeoh's latest project. Instead of having a regular sparring partner as he did with Ooi and Ong, the new approach is to hold discussions with various prominent personalities in civil society.

The podcast episodes will be updated weekly. Interviewees include elected representatives, think-tankers, NGO heads, leaders of civil society movements and academics - those who don't get much coverage or airplay on mainstream media.

