

Mahathir calls for rethink on Internet freedom

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Former prime minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad has called on the country to rethink the government's lack of control over the Internet.

In an interview with New Sunday Times, Mahathir, who had been instrumental in ensuring that there would be no Internet censorship, a policy still in place, said he had been unaware of the significance of the world wide web at that time.

"When I said there should be no censorship of the Internet, I really did not realise the power of the Internet, the power to undermine moral values, the power to create problems and agitate people," he told the daily.

For example, he said in the report, pornographic magazines could be banned in the past but now it can be easily accessed through the Internet.

"Now it is so porous that we cannot prevent all this filth from coming into our country.

"Countries should be allowed to devise ways of filtering the dirt that comes through the Internet," he was quoted as saying.

The former premier added he while self regulation would be favourable, there also had to be "some power to enforce and to punish".

Mahathir had during his tenure acceded to the Multimedia Super Corridor 10-point Bill of Guarantees, which among others, promised that there would be no censorship of the internet in a bid to attract foreign investors.

The move allowed for a free flow of information on the Internet, undercutting traditional media which is subjected to censorship by the government.

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