

Najib has most 'fake' Twitter followers, analysis finds

MalaysiaKini.com

May 15, 2013

Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak heads a list of world leaders said to have the largest proportion of 'fake' Twitter followers, according to a report on the online news portal Meld Magazine.

It says 70 percent of Najib's 1.41 million followers are fake, meaning that these followers have few followers or tweets of their own, but follow many other Twitter accounts.

Another 15 percent of Najib's followers were found to be inactive, according to the report published on May 3, while the remaining 15 percent are believed to be genuine Twitter users.

Trailing Najib in second place is Thai Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra (55 percent), followed by Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh (54 percent) in third place.

The other world personalities surveyed by the publication, which caters mainly to international students in Melbourne, are US President Barack Obama (45 percent), Australian Prime Minister Julia Gillard (36 percent), Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe (18 percent), Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong (14 percent) and Vietnam's Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung (7 percent).

NONEUsing the same tool that the magazine used - known as 'Fake Follower Check' - Malaysiakini found that only 51 percent of Najib's followers are fake, and 21 percent are inactive. However, Najib's Twitter following has since increased to 1.56 million.

It has been similarly found that Najib has the most fake Twitter followers among Malaysia's top political leaders.

NONEIn second place is DAP parliamentary leader Lim Kit Siang, with 38 percent of over 114,000 Twitter followers believed to be fake.

He is followed by PKR de facto leader Anwar Ibrahim (27 percent) and PAS spiritual leader Nik Abdul Aziz Nik Mat (25 percent).

Use of a similar tool provided by the social analytics company Socialbakers produced similar figures, with no change in ranking among the four national

leaders.

Najib had boasted during election campaigning that he represents change, because he is the youngest among the nation's top leaders and has more followers on the social media, including Twitter.

However, questions may be raised regarding the methodology of both online tools.

According to Fake Follower Check's website, its tool is 'very accurate' for accounts with fewer than 50,000 followers, but beyond that, it said 'the tool will still provide good insight but may better reflect your current follower activity rather than your whole follower base'.

Socialbakers says its tool has a margin of error of about 10-15 percent.

'Easy to purchase followers'

Regardless of potential flaws in methodology, social media expert Thomas Tudehope has reportedly said Twitter users can easily purchase followers - anywhere between 100 to 10,000 at a time and - and at varying prices.

However, Tudehope said, the politicians in question or their representatives would rarely make the decision to purchase the followers themselves.

"Someone might have deliberately purchased followers for them ... politicians have a busy schedule so I don't think they've got time to keep track of fake accounts," Meld Magazine quoted him saying.

Tudehope, who is a former adviser to an Australian shadow minister for communications and broadband, also reportedly said that the most accurate measure of influence is engagement.

"It's all about the conversations they're being involved in and how many responses they receive," he said.

"I think the trick is to put out more content, more often, to all kinds of different people. It's a simple strategy and one that I think works quite well."

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