

Gov't will not license online news portals, pledges PM

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The government has no plans to introduce a licensing system for online news portals, Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak said today.

NONEspeaking at the MPI Petronas Press Awards in Kuala Lumpur tonight, Najib (right) said the government will instead continue using existing laws to ensure no legal boundaries are crossed by media entities.

"We will enforce the law to ensure no one uses the race or language card to spread disharmony in the country or do anything that is against parliamentary democracy," he said.

Najib raised his concerns about the "culture of hatred" that is taking place due to liberalism and pluralism that is raging in social media circles.

As such, he requested Malaysians to think about an effective solution to regulate what is posted on social media.

"We need a positive control mechanism to ensure the law is not broken by what's being posted online," he said.

He was, however, quick to point out that any suggestion must not break the government's guarantee of not censoring the Internet.

In tune with culture?

He also asked the people to introspect on the issue of freedom of expression, which he admitted has become a crucial factor for many Malaysians.

"The recipe for success is simple, you need to ask yourselves about our identities as Malaysians," he said.

"Is freedom of speech in tune with the Malaysian culture, with our common courtesy and our values?" he asked.

NONE"It is not wrong to have differences in opinions, but to an extent that information plants such heavy suspicions that is alien to our culture before this?"

Earlier this month, the Singapore government enforced a regulation that made it mandatory for any online portal that with a readership of 50,000 a month or more to apply for a licence from the Media Development Authority (MDA).

Subsequently Communications and Multimedia Minister Ahmad Shabery Cheek (left) said that the Malaysian government is mulling doing the same, although he later denied the move was "politically motivated".

However, the idea seems to have been dropped, with Shabery stating yesterday that no law will be made targetting online media in the near future.

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