

Blogger reveals another side of Najib
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When Desmond Jerukan received the email inviting him to Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak's tea party at Sri Perdana in Putrajaya last March 13, he thought somebody was trying to play a joke on him.

najib visit to kuala kubu 030410 10However, when the 41-year-old writer of 'Nadai Nama Nama' received a second e-mail inviting him to the function, he realised that it was not a prank.

"Before the event took place, I was really nervous and didn't know what to do although the organiser informed me about the dress code.

"The only thing that I could do shortly after arriving in Kuala Lumpur from Kuching was to buy a cheap necktie at Sungei Wang Plaza's Parkson," he told Bernama here.

As he is working in Sri Aman, Desmond had to drive for two hours to reach Kuching before boarding a one hour and 45 minutes flight to Kuala Lumpur.

Desmond, an administrative officer in the Sri Aman Resident's Office in Sarawak, said he will remember the trip for the rest of his life as he had never imagined that one day he would be sitting next to the Prime Minister at a tea party.

To Desmond, the tea party was an enriching experience as the only other chance for him to see the prime minister is during the official functions in Sarawak.

To be able to meet the prime minister in an informal event was a rare moment for him.

"I find him (Najib) to be really sincere in getting to know his online friends. For example, when his officer called him through his handphone, Najib's immediate reply was that he was in the midst of an important function and asked the person to call back later," said Desmond.

Even after the function, the prime minister repeatedly told the bodyguards to allow his online friends to meet and mingle with him.

'I've got a feeling'

He said Najib even commented on the Black Eyed Peas song 'I've Got a Feeling' that was played during the tea party saying that the song set the right mood.

Desmond said the prime minister has his own unique way of breaking the ice.

NONEIn his blog, Desmond wrote: "The prime minister and his wife Rosmah Mansor were very casual. His friendliness also caught everyone off guard.

He broke the ice with me by talking about my camera.

"My, My... you have a serious looking camera there," And so it started with camera talk and I have to thank my Nikon D5000 for being a saviour."

With that ice-breaking gesture, Desmond said the rest was history as he together with other online friends talked about many issues which the prime minister listened patiently and attentively.

"The only thing that I could not talk about at that point of time was about Liverpool because I am a big fan of the club but the prime minister is supporting Manchester United," he said in jest.

Desmond who has a degree in Applied Science from Universiti Sains Malaysia and Corporate Masters in Business Administration (CMBA) from Ohio University, United States, said the hi-tea marked a new era for the country's current leadership.

"So far no elected representatives have opened up their line of communication. Prime minister Najib has created his blog, Facebook, Youtube and a website that has been constantly updated with the latest information," said Desmond.

As such, the prime minister has taken the initiative to be more accessible to the people by using the latest technology available and at the same time listening to their grouses.

Desmond said Najib administration has brought a new level in walk-the-talk concept when he would try to solve the problem based on the feedback received from his online medium.

"For example, based on my own experience, through the 1Malaysia blog and Prime Minister's Department on May 2009, I reported the risks faced by parents, teachers and students when crossing the suspension bridge at Nanga Klassen Sri Aman as the cables are in danger of being disconnected from the bridge," he said.

"Several weeks later villagers at Nanga Klassen told me they saw several 4WD vehicles from the State Development Office of the Prime Minister's Department there.

"We were shown the letter from the Implementation Coordination Unit of the Prime Minister's Department for the construction of a RM400,000 semi-concrete bridge at Nanga Klassen," he said.

Desmond said the suspension bridge was the only way to Sekolah Rendah Nanga Klassen and although the elected representatives had tried their very best to get financial support from the relevant agencies it failed to get any attention due to bureaucratic problems and financial constraints.

Hopes for more tea parties

"I am monitoring the progress of the project and this proved that the prime minister's website has made it easier and faster to channel development funds to those who really urgently need it," he said.

najib facebook accountHe said Najib has shown the power of the Internet in disseminating and getting information as well as taking action for the targetted groups and it should be emulated by other leaders.

On the Najib's walkabout, Desmond calls for more of such walkabouts in the rural areas as not many villagers have the opportunity to meet and shake hands with the prime minister.

On the tea party with Najib, Desmond hopes the event would not be the last as it can be used to as an alternative medium to listen to various problems from the grassroots level.

"The best thing during the event was the prime minister and his online friends were willing to exchange ideas for the sake of the nation," Desmond added.

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