

**Najib raps Utusan: Not too much sensationalism, please  
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Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak today issued a rare reprimand on Umno-owned daily Utusan Malaysia over its sensationalist tendencies.

"I understand that when it comes to sensational news involving famous people... a little bit is okay. I won't stop it. But (work towards) creating an era of a knowledge society.

"This is to ensure that we have a public that is intellectual, critical and capable of being objective," said Najib, in his speech before the groundbreaking ceremony of the daily's new headquarters in Jalan Chow Sow Lin, Kuala Lumpur today.

According to Najib, the role of a newspaper is not to sell reports based on sensationalism and conflict, unlike what was practised in the West.

"The Westerners say conflict sells stories. But that does not necessarily mean we must do the same because our goal is to bring the country success, not just through physical development, but through the development of the intellect and values.

NONE "That, is the important role of newspapers," summed up Najib.

Najib's light reprimand of Utusan follows heavy criticism of the daily by opposition parties who accused the daily of pitting Malays against non-Malays.

The 71-year-old daily is the best-selling Malay broadsheet and heavily expounds the idea of ketuanan Melayu (Malay supremacy) and affirmative action along the lines of the New Economic Policy.

In his speech, Najib urged Utusan to be wary of the competition, which now includes new media, such as blogs, websites, 24-hour news broadcasts and social networking websites such as Facebook and Twitter.

"Now, even Utusan has its own website. The news is faster and that proves our mettle," he said.

Mum on Perkasa

Meanwhile, Najib refused to comment about criticism against his administration for approving a sports betting licence to Ascot Sports, owned by well-connected tycoon Vincent Tan.

"We are not going to talk about that," he told reporters flatly after the ceremony.

Najib has been under fire by opposition parties and NGOs over the move, which they argued would cause more problems for society and taint Malaysia's Islamic image.

He has thus far keep a studious silence on the controversy.

Similarly, Najib also refused to be drawn into the war of words between MCA leaders and Malay-rights group Perkasa.

"It's... a lot of reasons... cannot just... this... okay... never mind lah," said the unusually tongue-tied premier.

Perkasa chief Ibrahim Ali had struck a raw nerve with MCA by calling on the federal government to withhold allocations and election pledges to the Chinese community, following their decision to vote against BN in Hulu Selangor and SibU by-elections.

Utusan's new seven-storey building, which cost RM90 million, is expected to be completed by 2013.

Kit Siang stops reading Utusan

In an immediate reaction, DAP supremo Lim Kit Siang questioned Utusan's ability to go beyond "race, Islam and country" and play a pivotal role in helping the government achieve its transformation plan.

"In the past year, Utusan has positioned itself as the biggest enemy and critic of Najib's 1Malaysia as well as New Economic Model," he said in a statement.

"In fact, in my 44 years of political life, I have never come across Utusan which had been more irresponsible, communal and un-Malaysian than in the past 24 months after the March 8 'political tsunami' of the 2008 general elections."

Lim revealed that he has stopped being a daily reader of Utusan for the first time in 44 years.

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