

**Dr M: I'm glad we decided not to censor Internet
Malaysiakini.com
July 20, 2010**

Ex-prime minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad has sung praises of the government's decision more than a decade ago not to censor the Internet.

In a posting on his 'chedet' blogsite, Malaysia's prime minister of 22 years indicated the ambivalence he had felt when he promised investors in the Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC) that the Internet would not be censored.

NONE "We thought at that time that even if we wanted to, we couldn't. The technology was not available for us to do this," he said.

"And so Malaysiakini and other sites flourished," added Mahathir (left), who has not hidden his dislike for the news portal.

Since stepping down from office in 2003, however, Mahathir said he realises Malaysia has benefited greatly from the decision not to censor.

"Now that I have retired I feel glad that we made the decision not to censor. I have benefited much from the blogs as have very many bloggers," said the octogenarian.

"There may be a few who have abused this blogging privilege but by and large it has served the public well," he added.

Mahathir said the tight controls exercised by the government on the information it allows the public to receive has been effectively countered by the unfettered blogging scene.

"The mainstream media in Malaysia need no censoring as they censor themselves. So the blogs can report what really happens. It can be the alternative source of news.

"And there is a need for this other source for the mainstream media will always be guarding their behind," said Mahathir.

Double standards

Turning to the issue of press freedom, Mahathir expressed cynicism about the West's claims that with press freedom, the truth will prevail.

azlan "Certainly they have never been in any way constrained when writing about the third world, including Malaysia," said Mahathir, a reference to the many criticisms he has faced during his time as prime minister.

Citing the disclosures by British journalist Robert Fisk of the double standards by which the media operates in Western democracies, Mahathir said he now realises that they, too, stick closely to the official line and use clichés which mask the truth.

"They too indulge in self-censoring," he added.

Contrary to the assumption that with press freedom truth will prevail, Mahathir said further, press freedom "is also about telling lies, about promoting evil agendas, demonizing individuals, twisting facts, hounding people to death and all other kinds of evil."

"The Internet has now given not just journalists but given just about anyone the same capacities to tell the truth, to lie and twist facts and do all the good and evil things. There is no censoring the Internet."

Promotion of immorality

The only exception to this, said Mahathir, is the need for the government to censor pornographic material on the Internet.

"I am concerned because there can be no doubt that sex related crimes are more common today due to the easily excitable young having access to filthy pornographic material. Sexual immorality among youths is more common today than ever before.

earth"Something has to be done to the Internet's promotion of immorality. The world community should agree that the promotion of pornography via the Internet should be stopped.

"Failing this Malaysia should censor all pornographic material on the Internet, guarantees notwithstanding.

"It is possible to do this now and it should be done. It will not be 100% successful but it will prevent easy access at least. Moral decay should not be allowed to be promoted. Certainly moral decay should not be speeded up via the Internet."

Copyright © 1999-2007 Mkini Dotcom Sdn. Bhd.
Source : <http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/137847>