

Bloggers unite in face of hostility
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Attempts to ridicule, cajole and threaten them to toe the line or vacate cyberspace has apparently failed.

Rather than fading into oblivion in the wake of the 'attacks' from the powers-that-be, bloggers here have banded together to form an association - the National Alliance of Bloggers.

They have yet to forgive Tourism Minister Tengku Adnan Mansor for saying that bloggers are mostly women with no jobs to keep them occupied.

"We have to thank Adnan, because he's now got us all worked up," said blogger Susan Loone during a gathering of some 60 bloggers at the National Press Club in Kuala Lumpur last night.

They also noted the proposal by Deputy Energy, Water and Communications Minister Shaziman Abu Mansor to make mandatory the registration of bloggers.

"Shaziman's proposal is only the latest reason why the environment under which bloggers operate is becoming more hostile by the day," said Ahirudin Attan, who operates the popular 'Rocky's Bru'.

Ahirudin and fellow blogger Jeff Ooi, who runs 'Screenshots', have been named in a suit by the New Straits Times Publications and four others for materials posted on their blogs that were deemed defamatory.

Painful truths

Ahirudin said the alliance was not formed merely on the impulse to protect themselves from the authorities' hostility.

He said while some bloggers often tell 'painful truths' about those in power, they have yet to come under siege as a whole.

The alliance could also serve the positive aim of promoting blogging and improving its members' skills and knowledge through training and educational programmes, he added.

The bloggers, who agreed unanimously to the proposal, set up a pro-tem committee that would oversee the write-up of a constitution and registration of the alliance with the Registrar of Societies (ROS).

Ahirudin and Ooi were voted as president and vice-president respectively while former NSTP journalist Nuraina A Samad was picked as secretary.

The alliance's prescribed 'code of conduct' was also a topic of discussion for the members last night.

Syed Azidi Syed Abdul Aziz, who operates the 'kickdafella' blog, said members should refrain from attacking their peers.

"We cannot abuse that freedom to openly attack other bloggers," he said.

Loone, on the other hand, expressed hope that the guidelines would not be too rigid.

"We don't want to see a blogger being sued by the alliance for breaching regulations," said the Bangkok-based freelance writer.

Others, meanwhile, urged for a code that would bind bloggers to the same high standards they demand of those in power as well as in the traditional media.

"Bloggers should themselves be able to come up to that standard," Ahirudin said when met later.

He said a meeting of the alliance's pro-tem members will be scheduled within the next few weeks to prepare the documents for the ROS.

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