

Government jittery over vocal media bloggers
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The love-hate relationship between the government and citizens is caused by those who are increasingly blogging about 'emperors in their news clothes', said blogger Jeff Ooi.

Ooi was speaking during the panel session at the 6th Perdana Discourse Series entitled 'Media and National Development', organised by Perdana Leadership Foundation in Putrajaya today.

"This comes from the comments made by those in Parliament asking for bloggers to be registered. Bloggers are also labeled unemployed and as frustrated journalists.

"Imagine, bloggers are being defined by non-bloggers," mused Ooi, referring to the growing misunderstanding of bloggers.

He observed that there is a new generation of Malaysians who are more vocal and opinionated and use blogs as their medium of expression.

Ooi said former premier Dr Mahathir Mohamad would make a great blogger.

"I believe should he blog one day, he would be a fantastic blogger. I hope he does that.

"Just like most bloggers, he is opinionated and does his own research. He doesn't need spin doctors or ghostwriters," he said as the crowd of 250 people chuckled.

Ooi opined that a generation of 'intelligentsia' is fast emerging. These are people who are exposed to overseas education and communicate using the Internet for both work and play.

He added that the opinion space is no longer the monopoly of newsroom editors.

"Even the bloggers have their two-cents worth when it comes to shaping and influencing public opinion," said Ooi, whose Screenshots has been dubbed as the country's most influential blog.

Content is not king

Malaysiakini editor-in-chief Steven Gan, who was also a panel speaker at the function, said increasingly technology is redefining news media and its relationship to audiences.

"Content is king, so they say. They're wrong. Dead wrong. Content is not king. Technology is king," he said.

"Content providers - newspapers, television and radio stations (the traditional media) - are facing problems everywhere. It's technology and telecommunication companies that are reaping the rewards of the Internet."

He argued that in years to come, media is anything people want to read, watch or listen to - whether this comes from amateurs or the professionals.

“That’s a scary thought, but we will have to learn to deal with it.”

Other panelists include former New Straits Times Press group editor-in-chief Abdul Kadir Jasin, who spoke about the history of developmental journalism before the country’s independence.

Meanwhile, veterinarian and student leader Dr Kamalan Jeeva touched on the role of blogs in sending the right messages to the government.

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