

**Social media can help bring change**  
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**S Pathmawathy**

With more than 90 percent of Malaysians considered as avid users of online social media, the medium is emerging as an influential tool, said Universiti Malaya's associate professor Abu Hassan Hasbullah.

Comparing to the United States and Europe, he said Malaysia has a surprisingly large number of social media fans.

selangor youth convention 200310 abu hassan hasbullah While Abu Hassan encouraged young people to use social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter, he urged them to also develop a critical mind.

Speaking to 900 students at the National Youth Conference in Petaling Jaya today, Abu Hassan said the emergence of new media has become a "religion" among the faithful.

The communication professor gave an inspiring speech on the role of the youth in the 21st century and their involvement in political issues.

"Move away from primitive politics," he advised those attending the conference, which is organised by the Selangor government.

Abu Hassan lamented that some among the younger generation are caught in "primitive times" which has led to an erosion of ingenuity.

According to him, this is a stumbling block in addressing the multi-dimensional crises affecting the country.

"It is no longer enough to voice your views through demonstrations. A leader should be well-versed in global, and not just local issues," he stressed.

Open dialogue

This message was reiterated at the open dialogue between the students and a group comprising members of parliament, state assembly representatives as well as political analysts.

Pointing out the strength of the youth, political analyst and chief executive of Selangor economic advisory office Rafizi Ramli said:

"Youths have the biggest social-economic influence, but the problem is they don't know or unwilling to utilise their power and would rather let older people do the work."

He urged young people to utilise new media in bringing about change in the country and to exercise their right to vote.