

**Cyber campaigning for the GE**  
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If the general election is held next year, what kind of election would it be? How would the Internet change the election ecology and affect the election results?

Undeniably, except for the Malayan People's Socialist Front (SF) which was comparable with the BN coalition in the 1950s and the 1960s, the weakest element of local opposition parties has always been the weak grassroots organization.

The 1950s to 1960s was an era of intense ideological struggle. Component parties of the SF, namely the Labour Party of Malaya and the People's Party, took the line of workers and peasants. They had a powerful and tight grassroots organization, and were not only popular in the trade union movements, but also active in serving the people. They went down to the public to build roads and bridges, gaining the people's support with blood and sweat. It was a great threat to the ruling party.

Since the folding up of the SF in the mid-1960s, the emerging local opposition parties that had entered the political arena had been unable to successfully form another political coalition until the 2008 general election when a loose coalition of the DAP, PKR and PAS was formed, and later took the now familiar name Pakatan Rakyat.

But the times are now different and the ways of struggle are different too. There are new approaches to fight for votes.

During the 2008 general election, Facebook and Twitter were not so popular yet as they are today. At that time, the blogs and SMS were popular, particularly the SMS, which had broken the monopoly and become the most effective campaign tool, making up for the opposition parties' deficiencies in terms of financial, material and human resources, as well as campaign machine due to their weak grassroots organisation.

Today, leaders of both the ruling and alternative coalitions dare not underestimate the importance of electronic cyber warfare. You can establish contact with any politician by simply type his name on Facebook. You can listen to their words, see their deeds and even get know about their families, as well as share the dribs and drabs of their life. The more friends they get on Facebook, the greater the mobilization power they have during the election campaign.

The Internet has quietly changed our election ecology. Youtube, Facebook and Twitter have been grabbing the hearts of young people at an amazing speed. As young people grow up in an Internet environment, they get the latest news about the election and interact with politicians through the Internet. Netizens also share information and views online. Whenever politicians make any aberrations, the news could be uploaded onto Youtube and widely spread across the Internet. All these can affect the election results.

In this cyber era, it is not necessary to take the time-consuming way to personally approach the people and shake hands with them to fight for votes. Instead, candidates can actually approach voters and convey their messages through the Internet. Those who do not even

know what Facebook and Twitter is, are not only outdated but also might pay a heavy price of losing the election! - mysinchew.com

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