

Is 1Malaysia TV The Solution For Information Vacuum?

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Prime Minister Najib Razak made a very interesting observation when launching 1Malaysia TV on Sunday, the existence of an “information vacuum” in Malaysia in the information age with youths turning to alternative online site for news.

But is 1Malaysia TV the solution or it will part of the cause of the “information vacuum” plaguing the government’s credibility?

1Malaysia TV as Internet television is offering inter alia RTM1, RTM2 and TV3, the official channels which evoke intense distrust and low credibility of their information.

Without any change of policy to allow RTM1, RTM 2 and TV3 to be independent, non-partisan and professional tv stations, the primary cause of the “information vacuum” and also why not only youths but Malaysians as a whole are turning to alternative online sites for news and information would not be addressed.

Najib said information on alternative online sites as “sometimes fabricated or untrue”, but these criticisms are equally valid about the official media and now 1Malaysia TV - which is going to repackage the official media on Internet!

Although Najib said that it was essential to provide information to the rakyat rather than to black it out, “as it would only prompt them to seek it from alternative sources”, his administration had been guilty of the “black out” mindset and strategy when confronted with adverse or troublesome developments.

Najib’s own silence in December, which resound through the land, on the following five issues highlight this “black out” mentality and strategy, viz:

- The Cabinet position of Minister for Welfare, Family and Community Development, Shahrizat Abdul Jalil in the face of the RM300 million National Feedlot Corporation (NFC) Cattle-Gate/Cow Condominium scandal;
- Malaysia’s worst Transparency International (TI) Corruption Perception Index (CPI) 2011 ranking and score - 60th place as compared to No. 23 in 1995 and lowest-ever score of 4.3 when Malaysia scored 5.32 in 1996, which means that Malaysia under Najib is perceived internationally as more corrupt than under two previous Prime Ministers, Mahathir and Abdullah.
- Call by 17 international and national environmental groups and activists including Greenpeace, Manser Bruno Fund and Fern, for the arrest and criminal prosecution of Sarawak Chief Minister, Abdul Taib Mahmud and his 13 family members for massive graft and plundering of Sarawak’s rich natural resources;
- Penang High Court judgment against Utusan Malaysia, UMNO official newspaper, for mischievous defamation against Penang Chief Minister and Secretary-General Lim Guan Eng trying to depict Guan Eng as anti-Malay and anti-Islam, with award of RM200,000 for general and aggravated damages and RM25,000 for costs against Utusan; and
- The 2009 report of Washington-based financial watchdog Global Financial Integrity (GFI) that Malaysia continues to be one of the top five countries in the world suffering from the highest illicit capital outflow, registering a loss of over RM1 trillion (US\$338 billion or RM1,077 billion) in past decade, 2000-2009, as a result of corrupt and misgovernance.

Will Najib demonstrate a change of this information “blackout” mindset and strategy and use 1Malaysia TV to break his silence and speak up to give an accounting and perspective as the nation’s Prime Minister on these five issues?

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