

# Dr M: All have role to play on social media

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KUALA LUMPUR: Freedom of speech, including on social media, is not a licence to abuse, says Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, adding that the responsibility doesn't just lie with the user but also platform providers.

"In enforcing our laws to protect the public, all stakeholders need to work together to overcome technical challenges," he said at the opening of the newly-expanded Facebook Malaysia office in Kuala Lumpur.

He urged Facebook and other platform providers to continue to collaborate with the Malaysian government and law enforcement agencies in order to ensure that the social media space remains a platform for positive change.

One particular area where he wants stronger cooperation from Facebook is in the Community Standards Enforcement Report, which defines what is and isn't allowed on the social network.

"While there is some form of recognition of hate speech, there are other forms of speech that may potentially be a threat to a nation's harmony and national security," he said.

He expressed concern over how fake news or misinformation can spread quickly on social media, and that the failure to detect and remove such postings quickly could lead to dangerous consequences.

"The diversity in culture and tradition translates to very different consequences and implications in speeches and postings. If not taken down quickly, such speeches and postings are potentially harmful depending on what is being said and in the context of a particular country," he said.



**New posting:**  
Dr Mahathir  
writing a 'post'  
on the  
Facebook Wall  
at the expanded  
Facebook  
Malaysia office  
at Q Sentral in  
Kuala Lumpur.  
— Bernama

Dr Mahathir said freedom of speech without any concern for good human behaviour would be a disaster for any society, adding that "The rule of thumb is simple, what is illegal offline is almost always illegal online."

He cited the research done by the MIT Initiative on the Digital Economy which claims that misinformation on political news is more likely to be shared widely by users.

"Falsehood spreads significantly farther, faster, deeper and more broadly than the truth in all categories.

"The effects were *most* pronounced for false political news than for news about terrorism, natural disasters, science, urban legends, or financial information," he said.

"As a matter of fact, false news

was 70% more likely to be retweeted than the truth."

Communications and Multimedia Minister Gobind Singh Deo said his ministry is looking forward to working more closely with Facebook in the area of Community Standards Enforcement.

"While Malaysia advocates for a free and open Internet, this has to be within the ambit of our laws, and cannot be unfettered," he said.

Facebook Malaysia country manager Nicole Tan said the company will be launching We Think Digital later this year which will help people think critically and share thoughtfully online.

"I believe we can help to combat misinformation by building an informed community of users," she said.

Tan said Malaysia is an important

country to Facebook as it contributes to its continued growth in Asia Pacific, where it sees over 23 million users on its platform every month connecting with family, friends, businesses and communities.

Facebook Malaysia's new expanded office space is located at Q Sentral, Kuala Lumpur. The 15,000sq ft office is decorated with local elements including specially commissioned artwork by Datuk Mohammad Nor Khalid, more popularly known as Lat, Nee Wong, Fritillidea and Eddie Putera.

The office even includes a physical Facebook Wall and Dr Mahathir and Gobind were given the honour of being the first guests to write on it.

Facebook Malaysia first began operating locally in May 2016.