

PAS readies new media troopers for next GE
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By Melissa Chi

GOMBAK, Oct 23 — PAS is rallying its “cybertroopers” in preparation for an upcoming general election that it says is shaping up to be “an information war.”

“The world that we live in today is in a constant information war, news war.

“If we fall behind in conveying our messages, we will lose out,” PAS President Datuk Seri Abdul Hadi Awang (picture) told The Malaysian Insider after closing the party’s ICT and New Media Conference yesterday.

About 500 of the party’s “hardcore” ICT officers from all over the country attended the day-long event, which appeared to address rival Umno’s growing army of cybertroopers.

“We will use every means possible — Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, offline TV, online TV. We want ICT officers to have smartphones, no more outdated phones,” the Marang MP said.

The ruling Barisan Nasional (BN) controls or owns most of the mainstream print and broadcast media.

BN had its nose bloodied at the 12th General Election in urban centres such as the Klang Valley and Penang, ceding its customary two-thirds majority in Parliament as the Opposition took a record 82 seats and, at the same time, five state governments.

BN is said to have lost its customary two-thirds majority in Parliament and five states in the historic March 2008 elections due to easy access to alternative information on the Internet.

Umno Youth new media chief Tun Faisal Ismail Aziz has said that “80 to 90 per cent” of those online were anti-BN in the landmark election of 2008.

“Our target by the next election is for all division youth chiefs to be on Twitter and for every state to have their own cyberwar team,” he said in an interview with The Malaysian Insider.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak has also worked hard to engage Malaysians online especially through his Twitter account which now has a quarter of a million followers.

He recently used the micro-blogging site to invite Malaysians to his home to watch tonight’s football match between Manchester United and Manchester City, a move that appears to be part of a campaign to make “Brand Najib” cool.

The latest attack by Umno’s cybertroopers revolved around allegations of sexual harassment that were levelled against DAP Secretary-General Lim Guan Eng’s teenage son.

Pro-Umno bloggers had claimed that Lim’s son had assaulted a 16-year-old schoolmate and had tried to escape punishment by using his father’s name.

The Penang chief minister has denied the allegations but speculation has persisted after

Deputy Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin and Umno's Utusan Malaysia stated that a mere denial is insufficient.

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