

**Sarawak Poised To Shake Off Communications Black Spot Tag, Says Najib
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KUCHING, April 28 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak said Sarawak is poised to shake off once and for all its reputation as a communications black spot with its broadband penetration set to increase to more than 50 percent by year's end.

He said, thanks to the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission's work to establish 600 Wifi connections in rural villages, it would spur the national efforts to achieve a 75 percent penetration rate across Malaysia by 2015.

By then more than five million households would be online, he said when launching the Sarawak Social Media Convention themed "Connect and Engage" here.

"Let us make no mistake - with the federal and state governments intensifying their efforts to develop communications infrastructure, especially in the rural interiors - already 34 community broadband centres offering high speed broadband have been set up in 27 Parliamentary constituencies across the state," he said.

In terms of internet access, he said, the challenge for the government was to also bring internet to rural Sarawak with the same conviction as its drive to meet basic infrastructure needs like electricity and clean water supplies.

However, Najib said, connectivity was set to improve dramatically across the board with coverage under the rural water supply and electrification programmes expected to hit 90 and 95 percent respectively by 2013.

"And, as areas that were once dependent on generators are transformed by a regular electricity supply, communities once considered out of range will proudly take their place on the information superhighway," he said.

He was confident that not just urban areas in Sarawak but more rural Sarawakians would also soon be directly connected to the world wide web.

"I am determined to do everything possible to bring digital development to our nation's less developed areas and to close the digital divide," said the prime minister, adding that it would not be long before kampong and longhouse dwellers would be seen posting messages and pictures on social media sites.

For example, he said, there were already more than 12 million Facebook accounts in Malaysia at present.

Source: <http://www.bernama.com/bernama/v6/bm/newsindex.php?id=662620>