

Active Social Media Involvement Is Plus Factor For Potential BN Candidate - Najib Bernama
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KUCHING, April 29 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak said, active involvement of social media practitioners in engaging local communities through blogs, Facebook, Twitter and other online platforms could be considered a criteria for selecting potential Barisan Nasional (BN) candidates in the coming general election.

The BN chairman said it was one of the challenges being faced to see elected representatives, as well as government and state agencies, becoming more approachable and responsive to the people by increasing their interaction, via the social media.

"The fact that they (social media practitioners) are actively involved, will add to additional marks that can be considered in future BN candidates," he said here when launching the Sarawak Social Media Convention Saturday.

The convention, themed 'Connect and Engage', was attended by 500 social media practitioners from throughout the state.

Najib was responding to the Sarawak Social Media Association's (SSMA) 10-point resolution which was submitted to him and Chief Minister Tan Sri Abdul Taib Mahmud, by its president, Wan Abdillah Wan Abdul Rahman, recommending that it should be one of the criteria for a person to be nominated as candidate in the elections.

Describing himself as a transition generation saddled between "generations X and Y" when referring to Abdul Taib's comment earlier that he was a "modern prime minister," Najib said there were so many opportunities for the government to explain what it had done, was doing and would do.

"There are also so many new ways for us to listen to what the rakyat are saying. But, we should never forget that, as with any tool, some people will use the internet for negative purposes, as well as positive ones, and we must be alert to those who spread false information against us and make sure that the truth wins out," he said.

As such, those, including himself, who were politically-minded, could not ignore the role of social media in elections and political campaigning as the internet had opened up a new front and challenging them to be pioneers in this emerging and exciting field.

"Quite simply, the rakyat is online, so we must be online, too. Where we used to send letters, now we must also send emails.

"Where we used to hold public debates, now we must debate with each other on blogs and social media. And, where we used to explain our beliefs in leaflets and posters, now we must do so with websites, videos and pictures," said Najib.

Traditional institutions and media organisations must also adapt to such changes in how

they communicated and accessed information, or else they would become irrelevant, he said.

Najib, who had been using blogs, Facebook, Twitter and other online platforms throughout his time as prime minister, said he had also informed all ministries to intensify engaging the rakyat using social media.

"In two weeks' time, I am scheduled to meet some of my online friends, including my 500,000th Twitter follower as I had mentioned through Twitter," he said, adding that it was an important part of his job because he was able to feel the rakyat's sentiment directly, although there was always room to do more by constantly looking for new ways to use technology to strengthen that precious relationship between the government and the people.

He said there were already more than 12 million Facebook accounts in the country and it was his wish to see all the social media practitioners, especially in Sarawak, to intensify and amplify what the government was doing.

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