

**On Google Hangout, Anwar seeks to widen youth appeal**  
**Malaysian Insider**  
**August 08, 2012**  
**By Jahabar Sadiq**

KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 8 — Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim will be the first Malaysian politician to host a Google Hangout next week, expanding his social media experience to widen his appeal among the country's hip and technologically-savvy youth who form a quarter of the electorate.

The "Borak Bersama Anwar" live chat-room on YouTube is set for 10.30pm local time on August 17, just two days before Malaysia celebrates Hari Raya Aidilfitri after the Ramadan fasting month. A Facebook page and a Google+ page went live early this morning to publicise the event, seen as a step above Barisan Nasional's (BN) rising activity in cyberspace.

"Politicians are discovering cyberspace in a big way before the next elections and Anwar is at the forefront of it. His Google Hangout is the first in the country," a source told The Malaysian Insider.

US President Barack Obama hosted a Google Hangout last January as part of his re-election campaign. The forum comes in the form of live video connections and video YouTube questions.

The Facebook and Google+ pages described "Borak Bersama Anwar" as a Google Hangout event with the de facto PKR leader and opposition chief that will be broadcasted live via YouTube.

"We would like to encourage people to post their video questions on YouTube and share the link on our Facebook or Google Plus event page. We will also go through your notes and questions to determine our topics for the night.

"If we find your questions interesting, we will also invite you to be one of our panels live as well. Thank you, and hope to see you at Borak Bersama Anwar," said a statement on both the pages.

The party has also set up #BorakAnwar as the official hashtag for the event, to be used on the Twitter microblogging site.

PKR sources said that Anwar will announce the Google Hangout at a press conference this Thursday, where he is scheduled to talk about Pakatan Rakyat's (PR) Merdeka logo and theme.

The Malaysian Insider has also learnt that PKR is planning to buy advertising space online for the event, a milestone in online political advertising in the country, as a growing number of youths turn to cyberspace for their diet of news and leisure activities, especially watching video clips on sites such as YouTube and Vimeo.

The YouTube Malaysia site was launched earlier this year and is seeing two million page views a day, with users spending an average of 30 minutes a session — more than the

nearly two million audience who watch Malaysia's most popular primetime programme, TV3's Buletin Utama at 8pm nightly.

Putrajaya's push for greater internet coverage has seen the broadband penetration rate for households rising to 62.9 per cent in the first quarter of this year from 62.3 per cent in 2011, said the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC) last month. Malaysia has about 6.69 million households.

The PR opposition pact has always been seen as having the upper hand in cyberspace presence over BN, but in recent months, the ruling coalition has expanded its online presence with several pro-BN news portals and a rising number of supporters taking to Twitter.

Despite the increased presence, a pro-BN campaign called "I Choose Malaysia" has been dominating the airwaves and prime advertising space in state and private television stations as well as newspapers controlled by Umno and MCA. The campaign features quotes from government companies' chief executives and pro-government bloggers.

While Anwar has seized on the Internet to deliver his message after being shut out of the mainstream media, his online presence is still less than his rival, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak's.

A check with the social media monitoring site socialbakers.com showed Najib has 1,135,529 "likes" on Facebook and 801,833 followers on Twitter against Anwar's 379,612 "likes" on Facebook and 179,830 following him on Twitter this morning.

But his followers hope the Google Hangout will expand his appeal to more followers.

"We need to reach out to the young as some three million are first time voters among the 12 million voters," a PKR official told The Malaysian Insider, adding "The Google Hangout is just one of the ways we will use to get to know those who spend more time online."

Hakcipta © 2012 The Malaysian Insider

Source:

<http://www.themalaysianinsider.com/malaysia/article/on-google-hangout-anwar-seeks-to-widen-youth-appeal/>