

Spending soars as BN sets out to conquer ad space
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KUALA LUMPUR, April 10 — Barisan Nasional (BN) and the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) spent at least RM73 million last month on advertising, as the ruling coalition launches an advertising blitz to keep Putrajaya in what is set to be the most expensive general election ever.

The PMO spent RM67.8 million on advertising last month according to data from consumer analysts Nielsen Media Research, earning itself the top place among advertisement spenders, well ahead of the RM43 million spent by classifieds, and the RM25 million each spent by Nestle and Unilever Malaysia.

Another report by Maybank Investment Bank (IB) Bhd last month noted that the PMO was also the top ad spender in February 2013, with its RM36.1 million spent comprising seven per cent of total gross advertisement expenditure (adex).

BN was ranked 45th in the Nielsen ranking, spending RM4.9 million in March. It also appeared in the top 20 spenders list by Maybank IB with roughly the same amount spent.

The Nielsen data is, however, based on the higher non-discounted rates, and does not include spending on billboards and digital advertising, where BN's spending was highly visible to Malaysians in recent months.

BN has gone on the offensive in the online advertising space early for this election, spearheaded by the BetterNation theme. The @barisanasional Twitter account started tweeting from May 2012, and has been featured as one of Twitter's "Promoted Account".

A "Promoted Account" will be advertised prominently by Twitter, its frequency depending on the amount paid, and reportedly costs at least US\$15,000 (RM45,900) for a three-month campaign. A "Promoted Trend" — for example, to promote the hashtag #BetterNation — reportedly costs up to US\$200,000 (RM612,000) per day.

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