

PM: GE13 will be Malaysia's 1st 'social media election'

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KUALA LUMPUR: The coming General Election will be Malaysia's first "social media election", said Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak.

The Prime Minister said that this was because politicians were already using social media networks to engage with the people online.

"Of course, it will not be the biggest factor in the elections, but it is certainly increasing the tempo of political debate and bringing more voices into it," he said.

Najib said this when officiating the Malaysia Social Media Week 2013 summit, currently ongoing in hotel here.

As an avid social media network user himself, Najib was given a special Leadership in Social Media Engagement Award at the event organised by the Malaysia Social Media Chambers.

The event held from Feb 26 to March 3 saw over 25,000 participants, including bloggers, journalists and social media experts from across the country and all over the world, attending in person as well as through live streaming via www.socialmediaweek.com.my.

Local guest speakers at the summit included Rembau MP Khairy Jamaluddin, Deputy Higher Education Minister Datuk Saifuddin Abdullah, Tune Talk CEO Jason Lo and television host Aishah Sinclair.

In his speech, the Prime Minister also said that the advent of the social media had greatly encouraged openness among the people.

He said that this also brought about a greater need for accountability.

"The power to reach new audiences also brings new responsibilities; to be more open and more accountable.

"People, especially the young "digital natives" who have grown up using the Internet - now have higher expectations for openness in all spheres of life," he said, after posting his first Instagram picture - a picture of the audience at the event which he took using his iPad - on his newly set-up Instagram account @najib_razak.

Najib described social media akin to "running on a treadmill that never stops", and that its rapid evolution pushes its users to be forward-looking.

"A recent study even found that Malaysia, along with Brazil, has the highest Twitter use in the world," he said.

He added that the Government had put in much effort to ensure that every Malaysian had access to social media.

"We cannot afford to let parts of society be left on the wrong side of the 'digital divide', cut off from the most potent force for education and enterprise in the modern world.

"We are working to make sure that doesn't happen, through initiatives like Digital Malaysia, offering smartphone vouchers to young people, and expanding broadband access in rural areas.

"I want all Malaysians to be ready for the fast approaching future," he said.

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