

Najib wants MCMC laws strengthened to fight 'unfair trial by social media'

The Malaysian Insider

August 2, 2015

By Ram Anand

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak today said that Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC) legislation needs to be improved in order to "rectify" a trend of "trial by social media", which he said only benefit the opposition.

Najib told delegates, while officiating the Hulu Selangor Umno AGM today, that his party, Umno, is being badly affected by the ongoing trend where everyone related to the administration was "perceived to be guilty until proven innocent".

"This is not fair. When any news comes out about the opposition, people think it's not true. When any news is spread about us, people immediately think it's true," he said.

"We need to rectify this. MCMC laws must be improved to this end," he added.

He said that he was not proposing to clamp down on freedom of speech, but said that every freedom must have its limits.

Najib and his administration are facing mounting criticism over their handling of the 1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB) controversy.

However, Najib said today that the challenges he is facing did not faze him and said that his spirit has not wavered despite the circumstances.

"Today, I had a programme in Pekan, and then I rushed here, and then I have another programme in Rembau," he said. "This is my schedule for a Sunday, but I do not feel tired. My spirit remains the same."

MCMC recently acted to block local access to whistleblower site Sarawak Report after the latter's series of exposes on 1MDB.

Najib's view echoed that of newly-minted Communications and Multimedia Minister Datuk Seri Mohd Salleh Said Keruak who said today that the law that regulates Internet content in Malaysia will be amended to protect citizens from "slander" and "character assassination".

"We (will) review the Communications and Multimedia Act 1998 (CMA) so that we can strike a balance between not stifling free speech and continuing with freedom of information, while at the same time protecting Malaysians from criminal acts that appear to have become the trend of late," Salleh wrote in a blog posting today.

He said when the government first enacted the CMA in 1998, it did not foresee the popularity of the Internet and the widespread use of social media.

He added that the popular use of the Internet has given rise to crimes such as fraud, data theft, identity theft, and fabrication of news and documents. – August 2, 2015.

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