

TO OFFICIATE THE OPENING OF FACEBOOK MALAYSIA

By : YAB. TUN DR. MAHATHIR BIN MOHAMAD, PERDANA MENTERI MALAYSIA

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1. Thank you for inviting me to officiate the opening of Facebook Malaysia. To my mind, the opening of Facebook Malaysia today re-affirms the nation's commitment to ensure that our people are communicating and are staying connected.

2. For us, the freedom and ease of communicating with each other and being connected at all times are powerful contributors to inclusiveness which in turn will see opportunities and prosperity being shared.

3. To most of us, having a Facebook account is almost a given, an expected part of being online – very much like having our own email address. And because Facebook is so popular, other websites have worked to integrate Facebook. We can use a single Facebook account to sign in to different services across the Web.

4. That is living up to the objective of Facebook of making the world more open and connected by providing a platform where people can share messages and ideas freely.

5. The rise of borderlessness and interconnectivity in social media have altered the old-fashioned way of communication. People stay informed and are engaged at any time they choose to, and they can do it from anywhere. And freedom of getting information online can be put to good use or otherwise.

6. According to the MIT Initiative on the Digital Economy, falsehood spread “significantly farther, faster, deeper, and more broadly than the truth in all categories. The effects were most pronounced for false political news than for news about terrorism, natural disasters, science, urban legends, or financial information.” As a matter of fact, false news was 70% more likely to be retweeted than the truth.

7. Despite that, it is undeniable that internet and social media platforms play a vital role in promoting openness as well as inclusivity and a key driver to economic growth.

8. But the internet is increasingly being abused with the rising number of wrongdoings and offenses committed today, especially through the use of social media platforms.

9. Unlike in the real world, where social etiquette and manners can sometimes seem restrictive and limiting, people feel they have a greater sense of freedom of expression and attitude when using online networks. This has arguably led to a rise in expressions, feelings, ideas and even worst – cybercrimes.

10. The report on social media cybercrimes released earlier this year indicated that cyber criminals using means such as crypto jacking and botnets earn nearly \$3.25 billion annually through social platforms.

11. This could be very alarming to Malaysia as we are considered quite vulnerable and green in dealing with malware and malicious software.

12. The New Malaysia is on a mission to build, rebuild and reinforce our position as a nation of strength, integrity and commerce where prosperity is shared, and growth is accelerated.

13. The government is committed to move forward by focusing on digital economy to help our people communicate and stay connected and seeing our businesses compete positively as they grow into global brands. Both large and smaller companies need to embrace digital connectivity, use of data analytics and digital skills to explore opportunities to build digital businesses.

14. SMEs are essentially a vibrant push-factor in our economy, and technology could ensure businesses become more effective, which in turn could yield an increase in productivity and output as well as wages for the workers. For SMEs, it can be exciting to have thousands of “friends” on Facebook driving lots of extra traffic to your website or retail locations.

15. It is interesting to note that in 2016, some 18 million Malaysians were active on Facebook monthly. That translates to about 81% of Malaysians on the Internet. Amazingly, 94% of Malaysians discover products and brands on Facebook and significantly 62% make a purchase after discovery. As of March 2019, the numbers have increased to 26 million Malaysians that were active on Facebook.

16. SMEs can take this opportunity to further expand their businesses online and to penetrate the global market successfully.

17. On the Government's part, it will encourage and provide incentives to investments and collaborations in turning Malaysia into a hub for digital services and communications. In addition, the Government is also encouraging Malaysian companies to enhance their capabilities in these areas by collaborating with multinationals in order to become regional or global champions.

18. While Malaysia advocates for a free and open internet, this has to be within the ambit of our laws, and cannot be unfettered. The rule of the thumb is simple – what is illegal offline is almost always illegal online.

19. Freedom of speech is not a license to abuse, it is a responsibility. Freedom of speech without any concern for good human behaviour would be a disaster for any society.

20. In enforcing our laws to protect the public, all stakeholders need to work together to overcome technical challenges as well as address the need for greater information sharing towards the disclosure or discovery of information to facilitate law enforcement agencies to carry out their duties effectively.

21. Towards this end, I would like to urge Facebook, and other platform providers, to continue to collaborate with the Malaysian government and

law enforcement agencies in order to ensure the social media realm remains as a platform that generates positive change rather than the negative ones.

22. Another area for stronger cooperation between both parties, specifically Facebook, would be in Community Standards Enforcement Report. While there is some form of recognition of hate speech, there are other forms of speech that may potentially be a threat to a nation's harmony and national security. The diversity in culture and tradition translates to very different consequences and implications in speech and postings. If not taken down quickly, such speeches and postings are potentially harmful depending on what is being said and in the context of a particular country.

23. We recognise that social media providers have done their best to find automated ways to search and filter inappropriate post using User Generated Content (UGC) related to child pornography, terrorism and hate speech. The challenge now is to address the diverse spectrum and other UGC content in relating to religious sensitivity, political speech, sedition and even human rights issues, to name a few.

24. I am aware that Facebook and a few other social media providers are already working with the ASEAN Telecommunication Regulators' Council on this and I urge all of you to continue your cooperation in expanding the current list of areas for immediate take-down.

25. I believe that Facebook newly launched F8 together with Facebook Malaysia's "Fast Forward Together" strategic initiative will help support Malaysia's efforts to progress in its digital focused economic development path.

26. With the launched of 5G recently in Malaysia, we hope Facebook will work with our local partners to share the latest technology that enables improved internet connectivity as well as supporting community building efforts and to look beyond commercial benefits in terms of moderating content that can be harmful to the society.

27. On that note, ladies and gentlemen, I wish to take the opportunity to congratulate Facebook for its initiative and the opening of Facebook Malaysia.

Thank You

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