

DATO' SRI MOHD NAJIB BIN TUN HAJI ABDUL RAZAK
PERDANA MENTERI MALAYSIA
MAYANG SARI BALLROOM, JW MARRIOTT HOTEL, KUALA LUMPUR
12/09/2012
NATIONAL PRESS CLUB DINNER AWARDS

1. Ladies and Gentlemen, good evening. I am delighted to be here with all of you tonight at the third National Press Club awards. I have now had the honour to speak at each and every occasion and witness the rising stature of this event. From just seven awards at the outset, nine more have now been added. Tonight, 16 of you will be recognised for your talent, endeavour and ingenuity in reporting the news to the rakyat.
2. This year also sees DRB Hicom, TNB and Encorp join Scomi, Celcom, TM, Ambank and Naza in sponsoring the event. I would like to thank each of you for supporting a vibrant media in Malaysia.
3. I also understand that this evening's proceedings are being streamed live – so not only do I have a room full of reporters to be wary of, I have to be mindful that many more may be watching at home. Prudence tells me that I should avoid the subject of elections, lest it be construed as a hint or set off fevered speculation.
4. But the fact that millions of people can tune in online to hear me speak and watch the winners collect their awards reflects a deep change in the way individuals and institutions use and consume information.
5. We can now check Twitter to find out trends in Guatemala, Facebook to see our friends post pictures from Ayers Rock – or YouTube, to join the 130 million people who have watched the K-pop video Gangnam Style. I understand it has even inspired some creative young Malaysians to produce their own parody – Kampung style!
6. We can now share information freely across the world; with our friends, our families, even with strangers. It is one of this generation's greatest achievements. But while this changing landscape is both exhilarating and liberating, with it come new ethical questions. Traditional media is governed by codes of conduct, both formal and informal. I know that all of you here instinctively understand the responsibility to report what you see accurately, and to inform your audience without prejudice.
7. However, online users can deploy "guerrilla tactics" to misinform, slander or harass – and can do so under the cloak of anonymity. And as Samuel Johnson put it nearly three centuries ago:

"The liberty of the press is a blessing when we are inclined to write against others, and a calamity when we find ourselves overborne by the multitude of our assailants."
8. So as a government, it is our responsibility to ask: how do we ensure that online reporting is responsible? How do we ensure that people do not become the victims of intimidation and cyber-bullying? How do we ensure that freedom co-exists with respect?
9. It was with these questions in mind that we amended the Evidence Act. Perhaps it wasn't explained clearly enough what this meant for web-users in Malaysia: it is aimed at protecting people from internet-based crimes, such as cyber bullying. And I believe that it is a modern and forward-looking piece of legislation.
10. If we are to build a democracy that is truly responsive to the needs of all our people and not just some of them, we must empower our media – both old and new – to responsibly report what they see.
11. Whatever the medium, the best journalism is bold, inquisitive and accountable; fearless in spirit

and open in practice. It is an irreplaceable element of modern democracy. That is the kind of journalism that we wish to encourage, and which we are gathered here tonight to celebrate.

12. On that note, I would like to give my thanks and congratulations to all of you. Only a few will win awards tonight, but each and every one of you make the Malaysian media what it is. You conscientiously report the truth, bringing insight and illumination to the public – helping Malaysia on its path to becoming a developed nation.

13. And without giving any indication as to when the next election might be – I hope to see you all again next year!

Thank you.

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