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## MALAYSIA: BLOGGERS REJECT 'BIG BROTHER' CONTROLS



Kuala Lumpur, 9 May (AKI) - Bloggers in Malaysia have given a thumbs down to a proposal by the communications minister Zainuddin Maidin, to classify bloggers into two categories - professionals and non-professionals. "The proposal is ridiculous" said Ahirudin Attan, a former journalist and president of the All Blogs association. Zainuddin said that such a system will give readers greater confidence in a blog's accuracy and deter bloggers who have "an agenda to spread slander".

"Despite [prime minister] Abdullah's assurance that the government will not register blogs, his minister is still trying to do it, this time under the guise of professional and non-professional categories" added Ahirudin Attan.

All Blogs was set up last month to combat what bloggers say is a government effort to censor the Internet. Blogging has become an important alternative source of news in Malaysia where the media is largely state-controlled.

Regarding political bloggers the communications minister sought to justify the proposal as a means to avoid the abuse of blogs. The minister said that professionals would be those who "make sure that the news published is based on truth and not on gossip" and that the subdivision - effectively into first and second divisions - "would help disciplinary action against bloggers who abuse the system."

Nizam Bashir, lawyer and blogger, explained to AKI that the proposals are unnecessary and dangerous. "There are sufficient mechanisms in place to ensure responsible blogging" he argued.

It seems as if via this proposal for classification, fundamental principles of law are being sidestepped - presumption of innocence and a right to be heard. I.e. if you are classified as a "non-professional blogger", you are deemed to have run foul of the law.

(Fsc/Aki)

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