

Bloggers question rules of engagement

BY LIM YI HAN

RECENT moves by the Government to register two sociopolitical sites may “dampen” the growth of online space, said the group of bloggers known as FreeMyInternet yesterday.

They argued that the Media Development Authority’s (MDA’s) requests that The Independent Singapore and Breakfast Network register and declare their sources of funding and identities of editors imposed “onerous requirements”.

The FreeMyInternet group also pointed out that MDA appeared to have “no such qualms” about foreign funding when it asked Yahoo Singapore – owned by the eponymous American technology giant – to register as a news website.

In response to MyPaper’s query, an MDA spokesman reiterated that “the principle that foreign entities may not engage in Singapore politics is a longstanding one” and the reason for the registration is to “prevent foreign interests from controlling or manipulating our local media platforms”.

Political observer Eugene Tan, a law lecturer at Singapore Management University, noted that MDA appears to be acting differently from its usual “light touch” approach.

He said: “The rules have not changed, but it’s how they are applied that is different. The perception is that there is a clampdown. The emphasis is on pre-emptive regulation – that is, to deal with potential issues before they even arise.

“My sense is this is an active work in progress that seeks to ensure that the regulatory framework is robust enough before the next general election.”

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