

Yahoo! says new rules to pave way for accreditation

SINGAPORE: Yahoo! Singapore said on Wednesday, 5 June 2013, that new rules requiring the licensing of online news sites will help pave the way for it to get full media accreditation.



Singapore's official media watchdog late last month announced annual licensing rules for news websites, including the local Yahoo! portal, that will subject them to the same regulations as traditional media.

The move has angered the city-state's feisty online community. Local bloggers said they would stage an "Internet blackout" on Thursday and a rally on Saturday to protest at what they call a blow against free speech.

Yahoo! Singapore said accreditation would allow its reporters to get government media credentials and give them access to more official events.

While the site has a team of reporters producing independent coverage, its journalists are not issued government press cards.

Paving the way for full accreditation

"In the past few years, we were restricted from government and other authoritative sources because we were not seen to be an accredited media, that was a realm of newspapers and broadcasters," said Alan Soon, Yahoo! country manager for Singapore.

"The licensing changes will help pave the way for full accreditation and access for our reporters. We will be a stronger editorial team and our stories will improve because of that," added Soon, who is also Yahoo! managing editor for Southeast Asia.

The network serves a million unique users in Singapore each day, he said in a statement.

Soon said it was important that "regulations and guidelines remain meaningful and do not become a tool that restricts freedom of expression and genuine debate".

Yahoo! has gained popularity as an alternative news and opinion source in Singapore, where the mainstream media is

widely seen as pro-government.

Minister for Communications and Information Yaacob Ibrahim said Tuesday that despite the licensing move, the government would continue to take a "light touch" approach to regulating the internet.

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