



Parties go online to woo voters

By Botho Molosankwe

With elections just over a week away, campaigning seems to have moved to dizzying heights for some political parties - thanks to technology.

Whereas in the past voters had to attend rallies to pose questions to their leaders, the advent of technology means that members of the public don't even have to leave their homes to have their questions answered.

All they need is a cellphone or a computer and membership of new social interactive mobile community mig33, which is similar to Facebook. If the representative of a political party is also logged on, the public can chat to him or her, ask questions and be answered straight away.

Because it is a chatroom, other users are able to follow the conversation and base their questions on the answers given. Only six parties - ANC, ID, DA, UDM, IFP and Cope - have set their mobile groups on mig33.

But the ANC is the only party that has used the mobile community to chat directly to supporters. Because it is not a face-to-face discussion, no one is restricted in the kind of questions they ask, as Fikile Mbalula, ANC's head of elections, realised after logging on and seeing the question posed to him.

Mbalula is seen as one of Jacob Zuma's most vocal supporters and many questions were asked of him, especially now the National Prosecuting Authority has dropped charges against Zuma.

"This place is abuzz with Zuma, Zuma and Julius. They ask me about what I think

of Zuma's charges being dropped," Mbalula said.

But for Mbalula, one of the advantages of the system is that even if he chats live to potential voters, he can take time to think about the answers.

"You can take time to think about what people are asking and they are free to ask questions they want to ask. This thing is addictive and you can also get a girlfriend," Mbalula said, laughing.

Bontle Headbush of mig33 said subscribers chatted for free and only paid for data download costs. Those who would like to chat with their political parties or who want to be on mig33 can go to www.mig33.com for more information.

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