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Rais-Data

PERSONAL DATA PROTECTION LAW TO BE ENFORCED NEXT YEAR

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 9 (Bernama) -- The Government is expected to introduce a Personal Data Protection law early next year which seeks to regulate the collection, possession, processing and use of personal data by individuals or organisations.

"This is to protect the individual's personal data and safeguard the privacy of an individual," said the Minister in the Prime Minister's Department, Datuk Seri Dr Rais Yatim, here today.

According to him, in this Internet-era personal data of individuals, like addresses and identity card numbers, can be retrieved easily and obtained without the consent of the owners.

"And it is almost impossible to trace who released the data and the new legislation ought to - in terms of the rights of individuals - determine what kind of data can be accessed," he said.

Speaking at a seminar on protection of personal data, he said the law was being drafted by the Energy, Communications and Multimedia Ministry, assisted by his Ministry.

Dr Rais added that the legislation would establish a set of common rules and guidelines and treatment of personal data by any person or organisation.

He also said the new law would, among others, impose stricter penalties against violators, including jail sentences of between three and 12 years depending on the degree of their crimes.

He pointed out that the emergence of Internet-driven economy and technologies had made it easier for the personal data of individuals, particularly consumers, to be garnered and exploited for commercial use.

"If such personal data are exposed for illegal use, this raises the issue of criminality and the consequences are certainly more than meets the eye," said Dr Rais.

On this note, he said businesses, especially those holding a lot of personal data like banks, hospitals and insurance companies, should be concerned about personal data protection as they would be accountable for the personal data held by them.

At the press conference, Dr Rais was also asked on Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's statement that Singapore must stop reclamation work in Pulau Tekong and Tuas pending a final decision by the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS) in Hamburg, Germany.

Yesterday, ITLOS directed the Republic not to conduct its land reclamation work which caused irreparable damage to Malaysia's interests or serious harm to the marine environment.

Dr Rais said with the tribunal in its interim period, both parties, especially Singapore, should exercise goodwill in resolving the matter.

"If (reclamation work) continues, the understanding of goodwill does not exist. The views of the Prime Minister are very positive and should be respected by neighbouring countries like Malaysia and Singapore, particularly Singapore which is conducting the reclamation work," he added.

On the proceedings of the tribunal, Dr Rais said both parties were required to submit studies on the geological and marine effects of the reclamation work in the next six months.

ITLOS would deliver its final verdict after studying the reports and the whole process is expected to last between six and 12 months.

-- BERNAMA  
MOT KHY SRI