

Hisham: Online sedition guidelines almost ready
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The federal government is on the verge announcing controversial set of guidelines that will define "online sedition", a move which critics say was an overt attempt at cyberspace censorship.

In a statement today, Home Minister Hishammuddin Hussein (right) said that the guidelines will be finalised after a meeting between him, Minister of the Prime Minister's Department Mohd Nazri Abdul Aziz and Information, Communications and Culture Minister Rais Yatim.

Others involved in the meeting are they attorney-general, inspector-general of police and the Malaysian Communication and Multimedia Commission.

"On a whole, officers from the Home Ministry, PM's Department and the Information Ministry have agreed on the contents of the guidelines," he said.

He revealed that the draft involves the policing of among others, items which are deemed seditious, malicious news, pornography, false information and other cyber crimes.

Six existing laws would be incorporated into the guidelines - the Penal Code, Sedition Act 1948, Film Censorship Act 2001, Printing and Printing Publishes Act 1984, Multimedia and Communications Act 1998 and the Internal Security Act 1960.

"Offences will be charged under these six laws," he said.

'Democracy is no excuse'

He added that the guideline will make it easier for people to understand constitutes an offence that chargeable under the Sedition Act, and to stop "irresponsible parties" from politicising matters.

"No one should use the excuse of democracy and freedom of expression when putting forward their opinions without considering the interests of others in this multiracial country.

"Freedom of expression in the true sense involves limits that should be respected. Otherwise, the law will have to step in to protect the rakyat," he said.

Breach of guidelines for websites, blogs and electronic communications will fall under the jurisdiction of the Information, Communications and Culture Ministry.