

Putrajaya wants social media to cull 'false news'

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The government is going on the offensive against alleged “false information” particularly on unnamed “news portals”.

Communications and Multimedia Minister Salleh Said Keruak yesterday announced on his blog that his ministry will engage media platform providers to stem what it claims is “false information and rumours” on the Internet.

“The issue of false information has recently taken centre stage in the media, especially online news portals.

“In this respect, I have instructed the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC) to meet Facebook, Google and Twitter soon to seek their cooperation to stem the increasing tide of false information and rumours from spreading via their social media applications,” wrote the newly minted minister.

“Although these three social media platform providers have been cooperating with various Malaysian authorities, the level of cooperation needs to be stepped up,” he added.

Salleh said it although the government can restrict access to such social media, it was not practical as many are “using such applications positively and not for negative or reprehensive purposes”.

“At this point of time, although it is possible for authorities to restrict access or block such applications, they will not do so as the majority of social media users,” he said.

“However, this does not mean that the public can post information unchecked without respect or regard to the law.

“The online environment is not a lawless space and action can be taken against anyone found to have breached the law, including in the online space.”

'Not doing enough'

Arguing “sensitive or unverified information might potentially spark an untoward situation likely to jeopardise public safety”, the minister called on the three platforms to cooperate, as it is “vital in the public interest”.

He urged the social media operators to do more to act upon complaints.

“For instance, in 2014, approximately 78 percent of MCMC's requests for removal of content were acted upon by social media providers, with Facebook acting approximately 81 percent of MCMC's requests.

“Latest figures as at end of July 2015 shows that 49 percent have been acted upon, 33 percent by YouTube, 42 percent by Facebook.”

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