'Phishi' moves under surveillance
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There is no rush to implement an Anti-Phishing Act, a law intended to curb security breaches in Internet banking, the Dewan Rakyat was told today.

However, parliamentary secretary to the Finance Ministry Hilmi Yahaya said the government has taken several steps to curb phishing, a cyber-crime that involves the theft of personal details via e-mail, fake websites and short messaging system (SMS).

According to Hilmi, the US has moved to implement an Anti-Phishing Act in 2005, classifying Internet cheating as a crime since 2004, but it has yet to be debated in the Congress.

He was replying to Ismail Yaakob (BN-Bera) who asked when the government would introduce anti-phishing legislation to protect Internet banking users.

"For the time being, phishing is punishable under Section 420 of Criminal Procedure Code. Those convicted can be jailed between one to 10 years, and fined and caned," Hilmi said.

"Phishing is also punishable under Section 5 of the Computer Crimes Act 1997. Offenders can be fined not more than RM100,000 or be jailed up to seven years, or both."

Warning system

He further said Bank Negara has produced "minimum guidelines" on the provision of Internet banking services by licenced institutions, spelling out security measures to be followed.

"The guidelines ensure that all organisations provide and constantly upgrade their firewall, anti-virus and intrusion detection system," said Hilmi.

Bank Negara, he explained, is also responsible for supervising the implementation of either a manual or automatic fraud warning system to identify and report suspicious Internet banking transactions.

"Anti-phishing is also implemented to identify and restrict traffic flow to e-mails and websites that are suspected of being involved."

Hilmi said that, to date, 29 phishing cases have been reported in Malaysia, involving transactions amounting to RM24,000. However, he could not say how many people have been charged in court.

Parliamentary Opposition Leader Lim Kit Siang (DAP-Ipoh Timur) told the House that his blog had recently reported the availability of customer profiles and details via e-filing of income tax returns.

He added that the authorities must introduce stricter laws to protect customers.

To this, Hilmi said Lim had made a serious allegation and should report the matter to Bank

Negara and the Inland Revenue Board if he has sufficient information.