

Vital for M'sia to prioritise cybersecurity, says Anwar

> 'Measures needed to create safer virtual environment for users, including new regulations to tackle online crime'

PUTRAJAYA: Cybersecurity should be a priority as Malaysia lags behind other countries, necessitating training, expertise and collaboration with cyber intelligence agencies to address the challenges, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

He said several strict measures are necessary to create a safer virtual environment for users, including new regulations aimed at tackling online crime and cyberbullying.

Anwar said the government has introduced the Cybersecurity Bill, and recently, the communications minister and the digital minister have focused on ensuring online safety for both domestic and international users.

"Yesterday in Ipoh, I addressed the question of whether this might restrict freedom. This country is a democracy, and freedom must be given for people to voice their views, whether they agree, criticise or oppose.

"There is a difference when digital and social media are used, for instance, to abuse people leading to suicides, or to exploit

children for sexual trade. Is this justified? There are scams (causing) losses of RM2.5 billion, with people being deceived through social media.

"When we say restrictions are necessary, some argue against limiting freedom. Is freedom for deception, stealing or abusing people until they commit suicide justified? These are issues that the public need to understand, hence the focus on personal safety," he said when launching the National Security Month yesterday.

Last Sunday, Minister in the Prime Minister's Department (Law and Institutional Reform) Datuk Seri Azalina Othman Said said new legislation to enhance digital security would include provisions related to the procedures and enforcement of a kill switch, which would be tabled in Parliament in October.

She said the law would, among other things, place responsibility on social media and internet messaging service providers to address online crimes such as fraud, cyberbullying, distribution of child sexual abuse material as well as sexual harassment

and grooming.

The day before, the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC) had announced that social media and internet messaging services with at least eight million registered users in Malaysia would need to apply for an Application Service Provider Class Licence under the Communications and Multimedia Act 1998.

According to MCMC, this requirement will be enforced starting Jan 1, 2025, following the introduction of a new regulatory framework for social media and internet messaging services on Aug 1, Bernama reported.

Meanwhile, on the South China Sea issue, Anwar said Malaysia's relations with the United States, China and Western countries remain good, despite international reports suggesting that China has sparked tensions and violated several regulations.

"We do not follow the diplomacy frameworks of other countries. We determine our own interests and strategies. In our experience so far, we have not faced any threats that we consider alarming.

"If we look at Western media, they emphasise that China has triggered and violated several regulations, but our relations with China show that all issues can be resolved at the negotiating table in an orderly and courteous manner."