

**Drafters say IT Bill to meet world standards, critics cry foul over 'crony club'**  
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**By Shannon Teoh**

PUTRAJAYA, Dec 13 — Government advisers on a proposed law to regulate the computing industry insisted today it was proposed to raise the local industry to international standards.

But it was criticised for being unnecessary by about 50 IT practitioners who attended the Science, Technology and Innovation Ministry's (MOSTI) open day today, with several accusing the government of "creating a crony club" for favoured companies.

The current draft of the Computing Professionals Bill seeks to establish a board that will certify individuals and firms who qualify to bid for the government's Critical National Information Infrastructure (CNII) projects as computing professionals and computing service providers respectively.

"They can use the certification as a way to justify choosing their favoured developers by saying they meet the minimum requirements," digital forensics analyst Harinder Singh told The Malaysian Insider.

"Most of my employees are self-taught. This will just make all of them move to Singapore," said Daniel Cerventus, who runs entrepreneurs.my, a local community portal for software developers.

"They are trying to create a protectionist private club," said DAP publicity chief Tony Pua (picture), who worked in IT before becoming Petaling Jaya Utara MP in 2008.

But panellists from the industry, academia and NGOs who have worked on the Bill for the past 2½ years said the Bill was part of efforts to revitalise the IT sector which Datuk Halimah Badioze Zaman from the National Professors Council said has "gone down since we were at our peak in 1994."

"It is not about the government wanting to recognise professionals, but the rest of the world recognising us," said Professor Zaharin Yusoff, alternate chairman of the Higher Education Ministry's taskforce on ICT human resource.

The Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (Unimas) professor in IT said the move would streamline the local industry with standards elsewhere, such as the UK where qualified individuals and companies are given Chartered IT Professionals (CITP) and ISO 9001 certification respectively.

"This thrust will allow us to be exporters of technology," said Association of the Computer and Multimedia Industry, Malaysia (PIKOM) president Shaifubahrim Saleh, adding that the Bill was so far the best vehicle to raise standards in Malaysia.

"But this vehicle is the wrong car," said games designer Ivan Lim, who was one of several IT workers who said there was no need for the Bill as the industry already had various certification especially from vendors such as Oracle, IBM and Microsoft.

IT professionals had raised concerns over the Bill when a draft surfaced online last week, saying registration under the Board of Computing Professionals will hurt the billion-ringgit industry by shrinking the pool of eligible professionals.

But MOSTI moved to allay such fears by saying registration was not compulsory and regulation is confined to those involved in critical national infrastructure.

With no MOSTI representative on the panel, the four who spoke to the public this morning admitted there was no agreed definition of CNII despite working on the proposed law for over two years.

They said one definition being considered was from the government's cyber security agency, which defines them as systems and functions vital to the nation in areas such as defence, finance, energy, transportation, water, health services, government and emergency services.

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