

Call for new laws to fight cybercrime

PM: Asean needs integrated approach to ensure better protection online

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KUALA LUMPUR: Asean needs new laws to tackle transboundary cyberthreats in order to develop the region into a digital economic bloc, says Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin.

He said there are areas under present laws which need to be reviewed to accommodate new technologies and challenges, especially in the area of security in cyberspace.

"We must be mindful that cyberthreats are rapidly changing and encroaching into every sphere of our lives, including how we communicate, how we work, how we conduct online transactions, how we carry out purchases and even how we defend our national security."

"They have also become more sophisticated, complicated and transboundary in nature."

"Bringing transboundary cybercriminals to justice requires a coordinated and integrated regional approach," he said in his keynote address at the first Asean Digital Ministers' Meeting (ADGM1) held in a virtual environment yesterday.

Muhyiddin said Asean must find ways to collectively mitigate cross-border cybercrime as it prepared to emerge as a competitive digital economic bloc in the post-Covid-19 period.

He added that Asean could consider legislation on data privacy and users' rights that could be applied to any digital entity practising in the region.



Regional voices: Muhyiddin delivering his keynote speech virtually at the opening ceremony of the Asean Digital Ministers' Meeting and Related Meetings in Kuala Lumpur. Also in attendance is Communications and Multimedia Minister Datuk Saifuddin Abdullah (top left). — Bernama

"This also includes stronger legislation against hate speech and to compel digital platforms to remove or punish such acts."

"Digital platforms could be required to assume greater accountability, allowing them to be sued as long as they have control over their products," he said.

Muhyiddin also proposed Asean

set up a fund to improve digital and Internet infrastructure among member states.

"We could also come up with an online platform to connect small and medium-sized businesses and artisans across the region, selling original goods directly to consumers, thus easing transactions," he added.

On the strained US-China ties, Muhyiddin said Asean would engage both economic superpowers irrespective of whether they were still at odds with each other.

"There may be differences and tensions across the Pacific between the United States and China, but we are happy to work with them all. In so doing, we stand to gain from

each of these partner countries.

"While we hope they can cooperate better together, we should also cooperate more with each one of them," he said.

Muhyiddin said rapid changes due to the global Covid-19 pandemic had accelerated the growth of the digital economy in Malaysia where things had changed drastically on a daily and, sometimes, on an hourly basis.

"Against this backdrop, the government has identified the digital economy as one of the key economic growth areas."

"We will drive forward the promise of shared prosperity for all by focusing on empowering Malaysians with digital skills, enabling digitally-powered businesses and driving digital investments," he added.

Muhyiddin noted that the pandemic had forced Asean to look towards digitisation, saying that it had given member states an unanticipated nudge to move faster down the digital road.

In this regard, he said it was crucial for Asean to work more closely to ensure the region's development as a digital economic bloc.

Malaysia hosted ADGM1, which will coordinate the development of the Asean Digital Masterplan 2025 that aims to guide the development of the Asean digital sector over the next five years.

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