

An educated digital society

A QUICK search of the Internet for keywords “The Star” and “online scam” generated 191,000,000 results, indicating that people keep falling for various online scams despite being able to easily read about similar cases. CyberSecurity Malaysia (CSM – the national cyber security agency under the Communications and Multimedia Ministry) reported that since 2018, Internet fraud has been making up the highest number of reported incidents. The CSM department MyCert reported 5,123 cases last year. Top of the list was the Macau scam, followed by love scams, loan scams and parcel scams.

A few weeks ago, Malaysians could finally put a face to the masterminds behind one group of Macau scammers who deceive people into giving them money by pretending to call from government agencies or banks (“RM85mil seized, cops nabbed”, *The Star*, Oct 9, online at bit.ly/star_seized). The news exploded on social media, with netizens marvelling at the perpetrators’ lavish lifestyles, allegedly funded by scammed money. That, dear reader, is not as surprising as the fact that some Malaysians continue to remain gullible despite various campaigns to raise awareness of this matter. So, what gives?

Perhaps the time has come for Malaysians – particularly the younger generation that are considered



Photo: AFP Relaxnews

“digital natives” – to be introduced to the concept of “digital citizenship”. Marty Park and Mike Ribble in their book *Digital Citizenship Handbook for Schools Leaders: Fostering Positive Interactions Online* (2019) defined it as “appropriate, responsible and empowered technology use”. They introduce nine themes: digital access, digital commerce, digital communication and collaboration, digital etiquette, digital health and welfare, digital law, digital rights and responsibility, and digital security and privacy.

Each of these components is designed to assist individuals have positive digital experiences,

acknowledge their actions affect others, and be Internet users who make decisions for the common good. Today, many schools in the United States have incorporated digital citizenship in their lessons while encouraging parents, teachers, and librarians to engage in continuous discourse on safe technology use, responsible Internet use, digital citizenship, and digital media literacy. Letting the younger generation loose in a digital world without any guidance would simply create another vicious cycle.

Scams come with different names and methods – there is little control over the devious online fraud that

regularly terrorises the cyberworld. We often embrace new technology and platforms without fully understanding their malicious possibilities – think about Snapchat, TikTok, WeChat, the list goes on.

Now, as we welcome the wonders of Industrial Revolution 4.0 and prepare ourselves for the introduction of 5G in 2022, the most crucial issue is: Are we fully ready to create a digital society that is able to use the Internet responsibly, reduce cyber-crimes and protect the general public from malicious online schemes?

Malaysians from all walks of life, especially parents, teachers and every agency involved in educating youth, must first be equipped with digital literacy.

Many would say schools are overloaded with tests and co-curriculum activities, is it feasible to squeeze in yet another subject? Well, we live in a multimedia age where classes are conducted online, and modules are created on MOOC (massive open online course) platforms for easy access.

Malaysia’s think tanks must act fast to find creative and innovative ways to introduce the concept of digital citizenship to the masses. Time is of the essence. Act now.

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