Cybersecurity Bill to safeguard national security and geopolitics

By Mandy Leong - November 24, 2023 @ 3:02pm

Defence Minister Datuk Seri Mohamad Hasan at the capacity development programme and public dialogue sessions on the Cybersecurity Bill. -NSTP/ASYRAF HAMZAH

KUALA LUMPUR: The Cabinet has agreed in principle to the drafting of the Cybersecurity Bill this month, focusing on regulatory powers and law enforcement.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said the National Cyber Security Agency (NACSA) will be strengthened to become the leading national cybersecurity agency and the enforcer of the proposed bill.

"The Cybersecurity Bill aims to establish a more comprehensive, encompassing cybersecurity law to complement existing legislation," Anwar said in a statement read by Defence Minister Datuk Seri Mohamad Hasan today at the capacity development programme and public dialogue sessions on the Cybersecurity Bill.

As of Oct 2023, 2,674 cyber incidents have been reported to the National Cyber Coordination and Control Center (NC4) and NACSA.

"The cyberspace has become a new domain for national security and geopolitics. State and non-state actors employ various mechanisms to undermine national security without the need for physical attacks, relying solely on cyber warfare.

"The conflict in Ukraine further highlighted the efficacy of cyber attacks in achieving military objectives, establishing cyberspace as a potent battlefield, particularly in the era of hybrid warfare," he added.

Anwar said the government is concerned about cybersecurity threats, particularly information leakage, cybercrime, technological vulnerabilities and hacktivism.

"Activities such as ransomware and advanced persistent threats (APT) pose serious threats, especially from entities with geopolitical agendas.

"The widespread use of digital devices and technology has increased the risk of dynamic and complex cyber attacks, such as phishing and Distributed Denial-of-Service (DDoS) attacks," said the Prime Minister.

Malaysia Cyber Security Strategy (MCSS) 2020-2024 outlines five main pillars with 12 strategies and 35 action plans. It also involves various cybersecurity initiatives, including enacting the Cybersecurity Bill, capacity building for cybersecurity professionals, strengthening public-private cooperation, and international relations.

Anwar said Malaysia will need at least 25,000 cybersecurity professionals by 2025.

However, it is estimated that only 13,000 workers are in the market now.

"The shortage of skilled workers in cybersecurity indicates that government initiatives alone will not be fully effective in addressing cyber threats without the capability, awareness, discipline, and cooperation from all parties involved.

"To address the shortfall of 12,000 required workers requires critical collaboration amongst the government, educational institutions, and industry players," he said.

He also welcomed the RM5 million scholarship contribution from the European Commission (EC-Council) to NACSA, which will benefit 2,000 Malaysians through international-level cybersecurity courses and placements for employees and researchers at NACSA.

"Through the collaboration between NACSA, Higher Education Institutions, and industry players, it would enhance and expedite the readiness, capability, and efficiency of cybersecurity in Malaysia," he said.