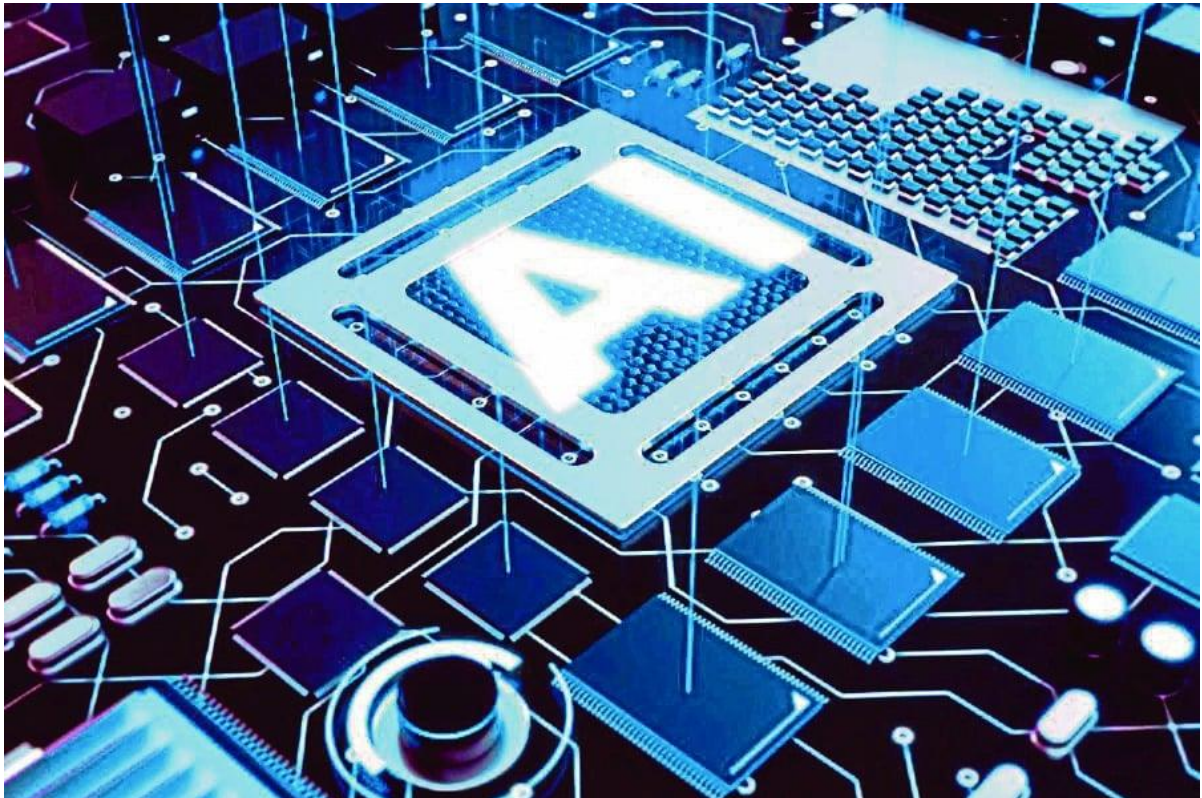


Protecting rights in AI era

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In the battle between innovation and protection of human rights, tech companies with deep pockets will intensively lobby for innovation and weak or no regulation. - FILE PIC

LETTERS: The Federation of Malaysian Consumers Associations (Fomca) appreciates the perspective of Chang Lih Kang, the science, technology and innovation minister, in his article "Navigating the future: Malaysia's ethical vision".

He recognises the growing impact of artificial intelligence (AI) on society and the challenging balance between the pursuit of innovation and the protection of human values and wellbeing.

As the regulation of AI is still at an early stage, these are six proposals to protect consumers and society from other jurisdictions:

Mandatory disclosure: Companies deploying generative AI should be required to disclose prominently when AI is used in generating content or recommendations. This transparency allows consumers to make informed decisions and understand the source of the information they are consuming;

Quality and accuracy standards: Establish quality and accuracy standards for content generated by AI systems. Companies should be held responsible for ensuring that the content generated by their AI systems meets these standards. This could include measures to minimise misinformation, bias, or harmful content;

Liability for harmful content: Define liability for companies whose generative AI systems produce harmful or misleading content. This could include provisions holding companies accountable for damages caused by content generated by their AI systems, particularly in cases of defamation, infringement of intellectual property rights, or dissemination of false information;

Data protection and privacy: Strengthen data protection and privacy provisions to safeguard consumer data used to train generative AI systems. Companies should be required to obtain explicit consent from users before using their data for training AI models, and ensure that data privacy rights are respected throughout the process;

Monitoring and enforcement: Allocate resources to monitor the use of generative AI systems by companies and enforce compliance with the regulations.

This could involve establishing specialised units within regulatory agencies tasked with overseeing AI-related issues and conducting regular audits of companies' AI systems; and,

Consumer education and awareness: Launch public awareness campaigns to educate consumers about the capabilities and risks of generative AI tech to help them make more informed choices and protect themselves from potential harm.

We call on policymakers and lawmakers to take a strong stance in favour of consumer protection and human rights.

It is necessary to have robust legal measures, including strict obligations on developers and deployers of generative AI systems to operate in a transparent and accountable manner and to restrict development, deployment and use of systems that are fundamentally incompatible with these rights.

Clearly, in the battle between "innovation" and "protection of human rights", tech companies with their deep pockets would intensively lobby for "innovation" and weak or no regulation.

The minister has rightly indicated that the journey to shape an AI-enhanced world requires a collective effort.

Thus, we call on the minister to invest in the creation of a consumer or society wellbeing task force and build its capacity to be able to realistically negotiate with big tech to protect human values and society's wellbeing.

The task force would continuously keep the ministry updated on the latest AI developments.

Focus on the potential of harm to society, learn how other jurisdictions are regulating AI, provide policy advice to our regulators and coordinate with other institutions, including the Asean or the Asia-Pacific region, on possible collective actions.

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