

Teenagers warned not to reveal personal details online

By Chok Sim Yee

KOTA KINABALU: Teenagers are advised to keep their personal details away from social networking sites so as not to fall victim to cyber crimes.

Mohd Dahlan A. Malek from the School of Psychology and Social Work, Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS), said while teenagers nowadays are smarter, they still lacked the maturity to fully understand the implication of their online activities.

Dahlan pointed out that many teenagers did not realize the need to hide their personal information or private photos to prevent them from falling into the hands of strangers, thus exposing them to the risk of cyber crimes such as pornography, prostitution, free sex, kidnapping and human trafficking.

Statistics in December 2008 revealed that Malaysia ranked the third highest in the use of social networking, after Singapore and South Korea, he said.

According to studies, Internet users in Malaysia have reached 16 million and will increase to 20.4 million this year.

Statistics from Alexa and Google also found that around 6.2 million Malaysian Internet users visit Facebook.

"Furthermore, many teenagers use cyber to form social relationships through Facebook, Twitter, Friendster and others which offer promotions and services that attract the participation of teenagers."

He added that some teenagers were also involved in cyber crimes such as cheating, stealing information, voyeurism, cyber gambling, espionage and illegal downloading of softwares.

With more than 250 million Facebook users worldwide and over 170 social networking sites globally, he said the social networking problem has spiralled out of control.

Dahlan said the major problem with social networking sites was the lack of control, and the lack of judgment of teenagers towards online activities.

He said this at the Tourism Forum: 'Issues and Current Challenges' organised by the Career Counselling and Guidance Division in collaboration with the School of Business and

Economics at UMS here yesterday.

Dahlan said the relevant authorities, government and non-governmental bodies are responsible towards tackling cyber crime.

"Apart from the relevant authorities, parents and teachers also play important roles in monitoring their children or students in their online activities," he said.

These include softwares that limit access to pornographic content and other risky materials to teenagers.

He also suggested psychological approaches such as motivational programs, awareness program, and setting up crime prevention clubs in schools to overcome social issues.

Meanwhile, Associate Prof Dr Jennifer Chan Kim Lian from the tourism and hospitality management at the School of Business and Economics, UMS stressed the need to protect and reinforce human dignity of both local communities and tourists.

While tourism could contribute positively to socio-economic and cultural achievements, she pointed

out that it could also lead to the degradation of the environment and the loss of local identity.

Jennifer introduced the concept of sustainable tourism management whereby the tourism industry co-exists with the economic, environment, socio-cultural and health and safety objectives of the nation.

She said the socio cultural impact of communities that are exposed to tourists' behaviour could lead them to behave against traditional cultural norms, or a change of lifestyle or working condition.

Jennifer promoted the elements of a responsible traveller, which include being interactive socially and culturally, a desire for self discovery and growth as well as having social and environmental consciousness. The responsible traveller encompasses homestay, backpackers and volunteer tourists.

"This includes supporting environmental conservation, being less materialistic, stay longer and spend more, and giving back to the destinations they visit," she said.