

Register all account holders

FOLLOWING the increase in cases of abuse involving social media like Facebook, there have been many suggestions to control it, even closing it down once and for all.

However, it would be quite impossible to close a social media website like FB as there are 15 million local accounts. It has millions of users worldwide and offers those with an account a variety of potentially beneficial ways to interact with friends and the website itself.

FB provides a way for users to stay connected with those around them and what's happening in the world at any given time. It is also used as a medium to exchange knowledge between an educator like myself and students. It's also a way to direct others to events or products. As such FB has more benefits than harm.

The Malaysian government has introduced many laws to regulate and control the cyber world including FB from being abused like the Communications and Multimedia Act 1998 (Act 588), Computer Crimes Act 1997 (Act 563), Sedition Act 1948 (Act 15), Defamation Act 1957 (Act 286) and Penal Code (Act 574).

In early 2012, the government

took another step to combat Internet abuse by introducing Section 114A of the Evidence Act 1950 (Act 56) in 2012 which extended the Malaysia Evidence Act 1950 to address the issue of Internet anonymity. Section 114A states: "A person whose name, photograph, or pseudonym appears on any publication depicting himself as the owner, host, administrator, editor, or sub-editor, or who in any manner facilitates to publish or republish the publication is presumed to have published or republished the contents of the publication, unless the contrary is proved".

Further strengthening of the existing law is one of the best ways, besides educating the people, to solve the problem.

The government could also take legal action under sections 211 and 233 of the Communications and Multimedia Act 1998 against owners, operators or writers of websites who misuse the Internet to spread slanderous comments, insulting the country's leaders, religious sensitivities and race.

Those who break the law could be slapped with a RM50,000 fine, one year's jail or both. As most of the

abusers like to use false FB accounts to spread rumours and false information, compulsory registration of all FB accounts in the country with the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission is needed.

Similar approach has been successfully taken by the government in 2006 when they directed all telecommunications companies in the country to register new prepaid SIM Card users. It was reported back then that the measure was to check abuse such as spreading slanderous remarks via the short message service (SMS).

Closing down FB in the country will not solve the issue of Internet abuse as the irresponsible individual might use other medium on the Internet to do harm.

What is needed here is consistent enforcement of the existing laws and adding new regulations to control cyber crime as well as continuing educating Internet users to properly use the social web media.

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