Promoting use of legal software

Campaign aims to inform firms about risks of using illegal computer programmes

By CLARISSA CHUNG
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KUALA LUMPUR: A campaign has been launched to promote the use of legal computer software, especially as Malaysia has an unlicensed software rate of 51%.

The "Legalise and Protect" programme, jointly run by The Software Alliance (BSA) and the Malaysian Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs Ministry, targets to educate 10,000 enterprises about the risks of using illegal computer software.

Headquartered in Washington DC, BSA is a global trade association of software companies which acts as an advocate for the software industry worldwide.

Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs Ministry secretary-general Datuk Hasnol Zam Zam Ahmad said it was hoped that the companies would see the benefits of using legal software at the end of the 90-day campaign.

"Software piracy is a global issue that no single individual or entity can resolve alone. It is, therefore, crucial for governments, organisations and businesses to work together to share ideas and best practices," he said.

Hasnol said the benefits of using legal software included improved security against malware attacks, lower financial costs from not having to pay penalties and increased competitive advantage as foreign partners are more likely to work with companies who use legal software.

"Based on BSA's Global Software Survey, the rate of unlicensed software use in Malaysia was 51% in 2017. This is an alarming rate," he said at the launch at a hotel here yesterday.

Under the Copyright Act 1987, he added, those found guilty of using unlicensed software could be fined up to RM20,000 for each illegal copy of software while senior managers of a company could be imprisoned for up to five years.

"From 2016 to 2019, the ministry successfully mounted 15 enforcement raids and seized computers and copies of suspected pirated software, with a combined estimated value of RM42,000," he said.

BSA Asia-Pacific senior director Tarun Sawney said there was a direct link between the use of unlicensed software and malware attacks.

"Our research shows that when a company uses licensed software, their productivity goes up, their data is better protected and their reputation is protected," he said.

"More than half of the software being used in Malaysia at the moment is not licensed, so there is a huge risk."

He said BSA was also working with government agencies in other countries to run this programme.

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