Ghana to set up cyber crime response team

Government is to set up an emergency Cyber Crime Response Team, to review existing legislature governing the Information Communication and Technology (ICT) activities and strengthen the country's cyber security.

The move forms part of government's effort to deal with the growing incidence of reported cases of cyber crime, popularly known as "Sakawa".

Mr Haruna Iddrisu, Minister of Communication announced this on Tuesday at a workshop organised in Accra for selected members of the security agencies to enable them to clamp down on the crime. The Communication Minister expressed concern that Ghana is ranked among the world's top 10 countries in cyber crime and added that it is a disincentive to investment in the country's ICT sector. Mr Iddrisu said there was the need for the country to form international collaboration to fight the global menace posed by cyber fraudsters.

He called on security agencies to go beyond merely dealing with the criminals and search for other collaborators who may aid and abet cyber fraud.

Mr Iddrisu expressed worry that use of credit cards in the country is restricted because of the growing incidence of cyber fraud, adding that the act is endangering the safety, use and growth of ICT in Ghana. He expressed the hope that the workshop would equip participants with the requisite skills and knowledge to deal with the menace.

Speaking on the possible negative social impact of cyber crime, Mr Raymond Codjoe, a legal practitioner, cautioned that if the situation is not properly addressed, software and computer viruses may in the future mutate data and alter Internet Protocol addresses in the same manner that AIDS does to the human immune system.

"This would result in emails being misdirected, web sites being relocated and the internet infrastructure being compromised radically," he said.

He called for capacity building for the appropriate organs of state as well as international co-operation for investigation and prosecution of cyber crime.

Mr Codjoe suggested that the Electronic Transactions Act (ACT 2008) and regulations made under the Act, should be implemented and its provisions enforced to deal with cyber fraud. Mr Jimmy Allotey, an Information Technology Security Manager of Ghana Community Network Services Limited, observed that many of the victims of the Sakawa reported cases include vulnerable lonely youths who search for marital relationships and resort to get-rich-quick schemes.

He cautioned against unsolicited lotteries and wager messages, which according to him are some machinations of perpetrators of cyber crime, intended to lure greedy victims to dupe them. Mr Allottey called for increase and strict vigilance on operations of banks and other financial institutions that deal with money transfer in order to track down on activities of fraudsters who transact businesses with such institutions.

He called for strict enforcement of Article 141 of the Electronic Transaction Act (ACT 2008) that mandates the security agencies to confiscate accesses of cyber fraudsters. The two-day workshop, organised by the Ministry of Communications, was on the theme: "ICT4AD-Creating the enabling environment-Cyber crimes and the laws of Ghana; Strengthening cyber security."

Source: GNA

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