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Parents losing IT battle

PETALING JAYA: Many parents are finding it tough to keep up with their more IT-savvy children, let alone monitor their activities in the cyber world.

Gesvin Jk, who posted a comment on *The Star*'s Facebook page, said many children were now smarter than their parents in accessing websites blocked for their protection.

"Even if the parents know, what can they do? Do you think if they block websites, their children can't access them using mobile phones? Nowadays, kids are smarter than parents," said Gesvin Jk, whose post garnered three "likes".

He was responding to the report that six out of 10 parents were unaware of their children's online activities at a time when 90% of the youngsters had experienced some form of threat on the Internet.

Internet-savvy: Many youths today spend hours in cyber cafes surfing the web or playing games.

Following this, Women, Family and Community Development Minister Datuk Seri Shahrizat Abdul Jalil announced the drafting of a strategic master plan to provide online protection to 11.2 million youths below 18 years of age.

Lakshmi Regu said youths today were able to come up with new tactics and learn new ways to evade their parents' control over their Internet usage.

Jeganeswari Chandragasan agreed, saying parents needed to do more "homework" in order to guide their children on the dos and don'ts of using the Internet because children "were smart and always had solutions".

Motivational speaker Datuk Dr Fadzilah Kamsah said parents must set aside a regular time for "heart-to-heart" talks with their children.

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"Be kind to them, befriend them and listen to what they have to say. Or else, they will find friendships outside the home that you won't know about. Even if you are busy, wherever you are in the world, call or send SMSes regularly," said Dr Fadzilah.

He said house rules were also important, adding that parents should not only give general advice such as not to go online for too long.

"They should also set specific rules for their children like allowing them to only go on the Internet for two hours after they have finished all their homework," he added.

Parents who took time to listen to their children, said Dr Fadzilah, were more likely to have their advice heeded.

Pusat Kebajikan Generasi Gemilang (PKGG) executive director Daniel Tan suggested that all computers used by the family be placed in a common area like the living room.

"As role models, parents should do the same with their personal computers to create accountability for the whole family.

"Parental control software is an option and should be installed with the whole family's knowledge with the intent on accountability rather than to spy," he said.

Tan also called on parents to embrace and equip themselves with the necessary knowledge and understanding to mentor and engage with their children.

"Methods and technology will change but principles and values do not," he said.