

Malaysian Parliament passes Bill to protect children against sexual offences

Law and institutional reform minister Azalina Othman Said says the Bill is crucial to protect children from all forms of sexual exploitation and abuse online.



Law and institutional reform minister Azalina Othman Said said the amendments were crucial to ensure the laws remained in line with technological developments. (Bernama pic)

The Malaysian Parliament (Dewan Rakyat) has passed an amendment Bill for the Sexual Offences Against Children Act 2017 on Wednesday, March 29, 2023 to better protect minors against such crimes.

The Bill was passed through a voice vote after it was tabled for its second and third reading by Law and Institutional Reform Minister Azalina Othman Said earlier.

Azalina said it was crucial to amend the Act to ensure the laws remained in line with technological developments and to better protect children against all forms of sexual exploitation and abuse online.

“One of the main gap in the law that must be bridged and given priority is the sexual abuse of children online. Technological advancements have made access to the internet easier for all, including children,” she said in the Dewan Rakyat.

The amendments to the Act seek to introduce provisions allowing children to appear in court as a witness as well as seeking to increase the age of child witnesses from 16 to 18.

Those found guilty of offences under the Act will face up to 20 years imprisonment and a fine of RM50,000.

Azalina said the amendments to the Act would also allow for the prosecution of not only those who watch and participate in sexual acts against children online, but also “middlemen and syndicates” who organise and distribute such content. – **freemalaysiatoday.com, March 29, 2023.**