

Broadcasting Commission Wants Safeguards Under Data Protection Bill

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The Joint Select Committee of Parliament set up to review the proposed Data Protection Bill heard more submissions last week on ways to enhance data protection in Jamaica, and there was a proposal from the Broadcasting Commission, which wants that office merged with that of the powerful information commissioner under the proposed act.

The information commissioner is the all-powerful officer who will answer to no one, and will be the sole keeper of data under the act.

Professor Anthony Clayton, chairman of the Broadcasting Commission, who was one of five presenters, said the commission will use the proposed legislation to change the general attitude towards data sharing and protection, as well as increase digital literacy.

Clayton said individuals were giving entities like Google important personal data without reading consent clauses before downloads. He said an entity like Google could predict when someone would divorce, based on prior searches, as individuals were moving away from established media to social media for information.

"We have to find new models, new ways to ensure our national and citizens' security prevent people's legitimate privacy from being compromised, and develop the capacity to detect and act against abuses such as fraud, extortion, grooming, etc," Clayton said.

He said that as Jamaica moved towards a more digital society, it will not happen if there is not seamless access to diverse content across different platforms. He wants any regulatory model to reflect this.

"Our (idea) of regulation has to be very streamlined, it has to be effective, but it has to be low-cost, and it has to be technology agnostic. It's not any one technology you're regulating; this is really about content regulation rather than physical infrastructure," he proposed.

The move to a more digitised society he said, will also expose us to more evils like terrorism as terrorists will move in to maximise on the space provided. He also cited cyberbullying, cyber fraud, fake news, blackmail, and revenge porn as amongst the downside.

He said the challenge was to make sure the good things happen and prevent the bad things from occurring.

The Data Protection Bill was tabled in the House of Representatives in October last year by Minister of Technology Dr Andrew Wheatley, who is also chairing the Joint Select Committee. Under the proposed law, private- and public-sector entities will need to implement technical and institutional support to ensure greater protection of personal data within their custody or control.