

PRIME NEWS



Youths playing Pokemon Go at a PokeStop in Gurney Drive, Penang, yesterday. Pic by Muhammad Mikail Ong

Hindu Sangam calls for Pokemon Go ban

DANGER: Players' safety could be compromised, says president

FARHANA SYED NOKMAN
KUALA LUMPUR
farhanasyed@nst.com.my

MALAYSIA Hindu Sangam (MHS) has called for location-based augmented reality game Pokemon Go to be banned.

Its president, Datuk RS Mohan Shan, said this was because players' safety and security could be compromised when they ventured into unfamiliar places.

"We cannot agree with the game, as it is not safe and can bring danger to youngsters if they fail to exercise self-control.

"The game can be addictive and people will spend most of their time on the phone rather than doing what they are supposed to do," he told the *New Straits Times* yesterday.

He also questioned the purpose of having PokeStops at religious locations.

"I don't understand why they use religious sites as PokeStops.

"This will misguide youngsters easily as they enter houses of worship with the wrong intentions and purposes," he said.

"We don't encourage the game and want it to be banned."

A Universiti Putra Malaysia sociologist had recommended that the game be banned as it carried many

negative implications.

Prof Datuk Dr Mohammad Shatar Sabran, a professor at the Faculty of Human Ecology, said Pokemon Go could cause one to become complacent.

"It causes people to neglect their daily duties," Mohammad warned, in the *Bernama* Radio programme *Dalam Radar* on Wednesday night.

He said Pokemon Go players, especially the young generation, now preferred to play the game rather than communicating with their families and friends.

He added that the negative perception came from the players' preoccupation in the hunt for the Pokemon characters.

Christians for Peace and Harmony in Malaysia chairman Wong Kim Kong, meanwhile, said he had no issues with the game, as it did not promote any form of beliefs despite having PokeStops at places of worship.

"I don't feel that the game has any connection with religion even though it uses places of worship as PokeStops.

"The PokeStops also tend to be placed permanently and not likely to be changed, for example, at

schools and religious sites," he said.

Wong, however, advised players not to be too engrossed with the game as it could distract focus and endanger themselves.

"The game, if not contained, can incite the culture of invasion and aggression," he added.

In *Alor Star*, the Kedah government has instructed the state Islamic Religious Department to erect signboards prohibiting people to play the gaming sensation at all mosques in the state.

Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Ahmad Bashah Md Hanipah said the signboards were needed after

the state's Fatwa Committee banned the mobile application game due to its harmful effects on Muslims.

He said the signboards were also meant to prevent people from turning mosques into places to gather to play the game.

"If there is enforcement (being done) on those who play the game, we leave (the case) to the relevant authorities for the next course of action," he said after chairing the 141st State Planning Committee



Datuk RS Mohan Shan



Prof Datuk Dr Mohammad Shatar Sabran



Datuk Seri Ahmad Bashah Md Hanipah

Meeting here yesterday.

He also asked the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission to conduct a comprehensive study on the game and take action against those playing it.

Bashah said civil servants in the state were advised not to play Pokemon Go while on duty

because it could affect their work.

However, he said, there were no memos or circulars issued so far on the matter, as he believed the civil

servants would be able to carry out their duties commendably without getting too engrossed playing the game.

The Kedah Fatwa Council on Wednesday ruled that the game is *haram* for Muslims and that the game should be banned in the country.

The game, developed by Niantic Inc of Nintendo USA, was launched on July 6 and has now reached the Malaysian market and more than 30 other countries since Aug 6.

It is a conventional "hide and seek" game that requires players to find and fight virtual characters based on real-world locations that are detected through smartphones.

Pokemon Go safety tips

The Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission's safety advisory for Pokemon Go players.



1. Protect personal information
■ Consider your safety as the game requires the use of Global Positioning System (GPS).
■ Parents should be aware of their children's activities as data is acquired while playing the game.



2. Be aware of scams
■ Be wary of fake mobile applications that are offered online as these applications may expose you to malware or hacker threats.



3. Monitor spending
■ 14,500 Pokecoins cost RM429.99. Thus, always be aware of your spending.



4. Data connection
■ The game, which uses GPS and Internet connection (WiFi or data) to obtain information on your surroundings, may reduce and affect your connection.



5. Bring a powerbank
■ Pokemon Go consumes a lot of the phone's battery. Always have a power source to recharge in case of emergency.

6. Beware of surroundings
■ Never trespass any dangerous, restricted or religious places and respect its privacy.



7. Stranger danger
■ Be aware of strangers and do not agree to meet any strangers while playing the game.



8. Don't 'Go' and drive
■ Do not play while riding a bicycle or motorcycle, or drive while playing.

9. Lodging complaints
■ If you have concern regarding the safety and sensitivity of Pokemon Go, people may contact the developers at <https://www.nianticlabs.com/>

10. Reporting PokeStops and Gyms

■ To report on PokeStop or Gyms, people may do so at <https://support.pokemongo.nianticlabs.com/hc/en-us/articles/221968408-Reporting-PokeStops-or-Gyms-Issues>

