

## FAKE VIDEOS

# 'DEEPFAKE TECH BECOMING VERY SOPHISTICATED'

Even the United States is having difficulty dealing with threat, says expert

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**D**EEPFAKES can be created easily and for free online.

Network security expert Professor Dr Zuriati Ahmad Zukarnain said all one had to do was search for deepfake apps and sites using one's Internet browser.

"There are apps and sites online that can produce these ma-

nipulated videos, photos and audio recordings of real people, animals or humans, or creatures that don't exist.

"A software embedded with artificial intelligence reads algorithms consumed through the apps and sites developed for entertainment. But the technology can be used for nefarious purposes, too.

"All a person needs to do is send files of images and recordings to such apps," said Zuriati, deputy dean at Universiti Putra Malaysia's (UPM) Faculty of Computer Science and Information Technology.

The videos, known as deepfakes, use artificial intelligence to manipulate the appearance and voices of people to simulate real-looking footage. Deepfakes are said to likely be the next wave in the battle over fake and distorted information online.

She said the technology had become so sophisticated over the years that there was no way of saying for certain whether properly done deepfakes were authentic or doctored.

Zuriati said it would not be easy to tell if the sex video implicating Economic Affairs Minister Datuk Seri Azmin Ali and Muhammad Haziq Abdul Aziz, the private secretary to a deputy minister, was fake or otherwise.

"We need facial and voice recognition experts (to determine its authenticity). Even then, who knows (whether the video is genuine) because the appearance and voices of these people could've been manipulated to the extent that the footage can look real."

She described the increasing sophistication of deepfakes as "scary" as even the United States was having difficulty in how to

deal with the threat.

"The risk is mostly for public figures.

"There are some deepfakes on former US president Barack Obama giving instructions he never did."

She said Malaysians must be mindful of deepfake apps they used and sites they visited.

"I advise those who were added to the group where the video was uploaded to exit and delete the group because there could be a 'hack risk'."

Computer vision and machine learning applications specialist Dr Alfian Abdul Halin said it was difficult to ban or block the technology as it was "open source".

He added that blocking it would discourage its use in the entertainment industry.

He said there were efforts being made by way of research and de-



Professor Dr Zuriati Ahmad Zukarnain

velopment into identifying deepfakes, but they were in the early stages.

He said the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission must get people from machine learning, computer security, policymakers, law enforcers and experts to study and come up with an action plan to counter the threat.

MCMC said those sharing sexually-explicit content on the Internet could face jail time.

Under Section 233 of the Communications and Multimedia Act 1998, offenders can be fined up to RM50,000 or jailed for a year or both.