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Children's AI apps to face tougher safety checks

DEVELOPERS of artificial intelligence chatbots and apps targeting children must have built-in safety features and filters, including regular risk assessments for harmful content, says the Digital Ministry.

This will be made mandatory under the proposed Artificial Intelligence (AI) Governance Bill, which will prioritise children's safety through a risk-based approach.

"For applications or chatbots that target children, developers must apply safety-by-design elements.

"This includes making periodic risk impact assessments mandatory, as well as filtering harmful content to prevent the psychological manipulation of children's minds," the ministry said in a written parliamentary reply to Riduan Rubin (IND-Tenom).

Riduan had asked how the Bill would protect children from the risks of AI chatbots and whether bot disclosures would be made mandatory to protect minors.

The ministry said disclosure requirements would be imposed in a targeted manner, depending on an app's risk level and the needs of each sector.

AI service providers would eventually have to display clear notices informing users that they

are interacting with AI, especially for apps classified as high risk, it added.

The ministry said the details could be set through sector-specific laws or codes of ethics issued by a regulator proposed under the Bill.

It said the Bill was drafted after consultations with the Women, Family and Community Development Ministry and the United Nations Children's Fund.