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Computers in govt agencies protected against attacks

PETALING JAYA: All governmental agencies have been told of the WannaCry ransomware outbreak and have armoured themselves against attacks.

"All government agencies at federal and state level have been alerted and ensured that their computers have been patched accordingly," said CyberSecurity CEO Datuk Dr Amirudin Abdul Wahab.

Dr Amirudin said the WannaCry ransomware exploited vulnerabilities of the Windows operating system, especially on Windows XP which has stopped receiving updates since 2014.

"The malware exploits a flaw in the network protocol called the Server Message Block. Unlike former malware cases which is localised to a single computer, WannaCry exploits the operating system's vulnerabilities and spreads it across PCs in the network.

"This is why it spread at such speed and range. Realising this, Microsoft came out with the MS17-010 patch to stop this particular malware from working and spreading," he said in a phone interview.

The patch was first rolled out in March this year but was not available to Windows XP, Windows 9 and Windows 2003 until May 12, after WannaCry's outbreak.

According to the Microsoft Security Response Centre, Windows 10 users were not targeted by the attack.

To protect themselves against any malware attack, computer users were urged to back up their files, avoid clicking on suspicious links online or download attachments in e-mail messages sent by strangers.

"Apart from preventive measures, if you think you have been infected by the malware, please report to us at cyber999@cybersecurity.my or call us at 1300-88-2999," he said.

In response to a question, Dr Amirudin said it was not an obligation under the law for anyone to report any security breach.

"It is not mandatory in Malaysia, unlike in some other countries," he lamented, pointing out that when people made a report to CyberSecurity, their confidentiality would be paramount.

"We can also provide assistance," Dr Amirudin added.

As of 6pm yesterday, CyberSecurity has yet to receive any report on infected computers in Malaysia.

"It does not mean that infection will not happen. At present, however, the situation is manageable and under control and we are always on the alert," he said.

When contacted, the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission and CyberSecurity Malaysia also said they had not received any report of a WannaCry infection in Malaysia.

'WannaCry' hits Malaysian businesses

By May Robertson
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KUALA LUMPUR — Several Malaysian businesses have been affected by the "WanaCryptor 2.0" cyberattack on Friday, says Kaspersky Lab SEA.

Its corporate communications manager, Sanjeev Nair, said Kaspersky was still investigating the cases and assisting in the recovery of the companies' data.

"We cannot reveal the names of organisations that have sought our help," he said.

"There have been a few local organisations that have been affected and we are assisting them with recovery."

Sanjeev said ransomware attack was becoming popular among cybercriminals as it generates substantial profits.

"Cybercriminals that are profit-driven will often use this attack," he said.

"Companies should back up precious data regularly and use a reliable security solution."

On Saturday, the national cyber security specialist under the Science, Technology and Innovation Ministry, CyberSecurity Malaysia, released a statement warning users of the attack, also known as WannaCry.

"CyberSecurity Malaysia is monitoring the situation of the ransomware attack in Malaysia," said its chief executive officer, Datuk Amirudin Abdul Wahab.

"We will take necessary action by providing technical assistance to the affected organisations and individual users on remediation and prevention through our Cyber999 service."

Health Minister Datuk Seri Dr S. Subramaniam also said on Saturday the ransomware would not have a major impact on the country.

"We still do not have a national intergrated health database system, only separate ones," he said.

"Every hospital in the country has its own system. Even if affected by a cyberattack, only the particular hospital will be affected."

Ransomware is a software used by malicious parties to obtain information from a user's device.

Information will be encypted and locked and will only be released when a ransom is paid through the digital currency, bitcoin.

More than 150 countries have been affected by WannaCry with nearly 200,000 cases reported.

Microsoft had released a security update addressing vulnerabilities in Windows on March 14. However those who had not downloaded the security update were susceptible to attacks.

Microsoft urged organisations yet to download the update to do immediately.

The Microsoft Security Intelligence Report, Volume 21, said Asia Pacific countries are the most vulnerable to malware threats.

Malaysia is placed 11th (with No. 1 as the most vulnerable), with a 27.6 per cent malware reported rate, higher than the worldwide average of 20.8 per cent.

Singapore is ranked 14th on the list, and Indonesia and Thailand fourth and eighth, respectively.

TOP MALWARES IN MALAYSIA

Microsoft Security Intelligence Report, Volume 21, released last year, shows malicious software families are:

▶ **Gamarue:** A worm capable of controlling one's PC, steal information and change the computer's security settings.
▶ **Lodbak:** A trojan usually installed on removable drives by Gamarue, it attempts to install Gamarue when infected removable drives connect to computers.
▶ **Peals:** It is a generic detection for various threats displaying trojan characteristics.

SIX CYBER SECURITY TIPS FROM MICROSOFT

1. Use only genuine, current and updated software.
2. Use robust and trusted anti-malware solutions.
3. Ensure safe internet practices and internal IT policies.
4. Be comprehensive on cyber security with business processes, organisational practices and suppliers, vendors and customers, not just your technology.
5. Have a data culture that requires data classification including access and identity management, encryption and multi-factor authentication.
6. For next-generation cybersecurity and data protection, choose a Trusted Cloud provider.

Reorientate science agenda

NOT so long ago, Research & Development (R&D) was hardly discussed in public. But try asking a man on the street about R&D now. Chances are many are now more familiar with what it stands for. Some are even aware of the issues in R&D. This has come about because of the growing public discourse on R&D. The Academy of Sciences can take some credit for this. Even Parliament has seen more and more MPs asking questions on R&D spending, and whether it truly benefits the nation.

The scientific community has come under pressure of late to deliver the promises of R&D. Though the nation's investment in R&D has yet to match those in the highly developed economies, the amount allocated is still substantial. Now the country invests around one per cent of GDP on R&D.

Developed countries meanwhile consistently invest to the tune of two to three per cent of GDP. Some of the Nordic countries allocate even more. However, in the developed countries, the contribution by industry can reach up to 70%. Here, more than 80% of the R&D spending comes from the government's coffers. Will this change in the coming years?

R&D commercialisation has been the topic of interest among policy makers of late. There is concern that the nation's investment in R&D is still not showing attractive return. Admittedly, the percentage of R&D which gets translated into business is still comparatively low by developed country standards. It is still below 10%. Why is this so?

The aim is to at least achieve an average of 30%. It is common knowledge that multinational com-

The prototype of a Multipurpose Rescue Vehicle developed in 2015 for flood zones.

panies which invest heavily in R&D attain even higher levels of commercialisation. This is attributed to the fact that most such private business R&D are driven by market demand. Through their constant vigilance of market changes, they are able to decide on the right R&D topics to invest in. This explains why R&D investment in palm oil which is more market driven has shown a higher degree of commercialisation than the national average. Even then, they can do with some improvements. How do we improve the return on investment for the nation's R&D?

In view of the urgency of the matter, the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation (Mosti) has initiated various programmes

to promote and publicise the need to raise the nation's R&D commercialisation rate. Mosti is also re-evaluating and looking at taking steps to further enhance the nation's ecosystem for R&D commercialisation. There is talk about building a dedicated gallery to exhibit the latest R&D products waiting to be commercialised.

Such a gallery will allow investors and the business community to meet and discuss possible commercialisation ventures with the owners of the R&D outputs. The Technology Park Malaysia Corporation (TPM) at Bukit Jalil would be the ideal place to showcase such potential R&D offerings. Established almost 20 years ago, TPM was given the mandate to be

the half way house for R&D going to market. Now that Malaysia has in place a critical mass of R&D considered ready for commercialisation, the time is right for the shared facilities at TPM to be appropriately upgraded.

Many agree R&D commercialisation requires a thriving technology community actively engaged in the exchange of ideas on R&D and technology opportunities. Such technology fraternity should ideally include research scientists, venture capitalists, intellectual property experts and business entrepreneurs. TPM at Bukit Jalil has the space to house such a community.

In fact, TPM's Innovation and Incubation Centre together with the Park's Centre for Technology Commercialisation should now merge to host such meeting place. The ecosystem can be further enhanced if other innovation players including Biotechnology Corporation, Malaysian Technology Development Corporation, Malaysian Innovation Agency and the Academy of Sciences are persuaded to set up office at the Park.

Even universities, especially those outside the Klang Valley, should seriously consider opening branch outlets at TPM. If that can materialise, then we would truly have a thriving technology rich community at the Park. Only then can we incite greater vigour in the country's R&D commercialisation and deliver a good return on the nation's R&D investment.

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Semerah Garden Hotel terima pengiktirafan MGDM

KREATIF. Semerah Garden Hotel yang telah menggunakan kayu terpakai atau 'pallet' sebagai bahan mentah utama dalam dekorasi premis mereka telah mendapat pengiktirafan Malaysia Good Design Mark (MGDM) daripada Majlis Reka Bentuk Malaysia (MRM).

Menurut Pengurus hotel berkenaan, Cheah Kim Boon, pihaknya berbangga dengan pengiktirafan yang diberikan kepada Semerah Garden Hotel seiring dengan sambutan ulang tahun pertama ia beroperasi.

Hotel yang terletak di Pontian, Johor itu menggunakan kira-kira 20 tan metrik kayu terpakai yang dikumpul dari loji jana kuasa arang batu Tanjung Bin.

Majlis penyampaian anugerah itu telah disempurnakan oleh Timbalan Menteri Sains, Teknologi dan Inovasi, Datuk Wira Dr. Abu Bakar Mohamad Diah kepada Kim Boon baru-baru ini.

KIM Boon (tiga dari kiri) menunjukkan anugerah yang diterimanya daripada MRM di Pontian baru-baru ini.