



Miss Pamela Chua is studying for a master's degree in applied information systems. TNP PHOTO: PHYLLICIA WANG

Scholarship recipient is on track to helping Singapore become more cyber secure

Ex-drug enforcement officer now targeting cyber criminals

LEANNE CHUA

Once an enforcement officer with the Central Narcotics Bureau (CNB) nabbing drug users, Miss Pamela Chua, 29, now intends to take down cyber criminals in the future.

After the recent wave of WannaCry ransomware attacks that infected Microsoft Windows machines globally, Miss Chua said she hopes the pool of cyber security professionals will grow.

She said: "Cyber warfare does not seem so far fetched anymore – it may come in the near future."

Miss Chua is in her first semester of studying for a master's degree in applied information systems at the Singapore Management University under the National Cybersecurity Postgraduate Scholarship.

Offered since 2015, the scholarship is for graduates and working profes-

sionals keen on protecting Singapore's cyberspace.

On top of her day job as a trade surveillance officer at a bank, Miss Chua attends twice-weekly classes from 7pm to 10pm.

"Initially, it felt uncomfortable going back to school again," said Miss Chua, who spent five years at CNB, where she gained an interest in cyber security.

She then left the bureau to venture into the cyber security field.

"I stepped out from law enforcement not because I lost interest in security, but because I feel that there is so much more I can do," Miss Chua said.

'DIFFICULT'

She admitted that "cyber security is one of the most difficult things" she has attempted to study, especially since she had minimal exposure to it during her undergraduate studies.

She has a double degree in business (with specialisation in information technology) and computer science from Nanyang Technological University.

One of the modules for her master's degree is information security, which involves cryptography – the science of writing or solving codes.

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Miss Chua is not discouraged by having to learn alongside "younger and brighter undergraduates", who may have had more exposure to cyber security.

She said: "I used to think about (being disadvantaged), but if you look at the bigger picture, we are all working for Singapore – so we should not feel like we are competing against each other, but take comfort that there are such people in Singapore and that we are competing on a greater scale with other countries as well."

Miss Chua hopes that more will come forward to join the field.

"People feel that cyber security is important, but they do not feel that they can do it," she said.

"They feel that they have to become experts, but they do not know that they can actually contribute via the different aspects in their daily lives."

She cites learning how to determine if a website is secure when shopping online as an example.

She added: "By having a little bit of understanding, you can change a lot of things."

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