

\$42m boost for cyber security research

Seven projects to strengthen resilience of Singapore's online infrastructure

By IAN POH

SOME \$42 million will be set aside for seven projects in cyber security research over the next two to five years, as Singapore looks to boost its defence against cyber attacks.

"These projects seek to strengthen the resilience of Singapore's cyber infrastructure and help us stay ahead of cyber threats," said Deputy Prime Minis-

ter Teo Chee Hean, as he announced the plans yesterday at the 12th National Security Seminar at Hilton Hotel.

The money will come out of a \$130 million government plan unveiled in October last year, to enhance Singapore's fire power against cyber attacks that could threaten government agencies and services such as banking.

The seven projects will involve research in topics such as digital

forensics, and mobile and cloud data security, and were picked from more than 20 proposals.

They were awarded in the first round of funding under the National Cybersecurity Research and Development Programme of the National Research Foundation.

The research will help factor security considerations into the design of information technology (IT) systems – one of three strategies suggested by DPM Teo to tackle "new and evolving" national security threats.

"In the cyber world, we should... factor in security concerns in the planning and design

phase, and develop robust systems with defences against possible cyber attacks," said Mr Teo, who is also Coordinating Minister for National Security and Minister for Home Affairs.

He also suggested working closely with partners here and abroad, and anticipating possible threats through moves such as upgrading the Government's Cyber-Watch Centre, set up in 2007 to monitor critical public sector IT installations round the clock.

With the upgrade, the centre is expected to be able to track unauthorised changes to websites and spot malicious files and potential

data leaks in networks by January.

The move to boost cyber security here comes amid a rising tide of cyber attacks globally. A study released last week by audit giant PwC found that reported cyber attacks rose 48 per cent to 42.8 million this year over last year.

The seven projects are initiated by institutions such as Singapore Management University, Singapore University of Technology and Design and the Agency for Science, Technology and Research.

One of them is a Nanyang Polytechnic (NYP) proposal to secure information kept on "untrusted platforms" such as public

"clouds", and help them to survive in the case of attacks.

It involves "shredding" and dispersing data across various storage nodes to make it harder for would-be attackers to, say, access confidential documents.

"Enterprises and government agencies are increasingly looking towards migrating data to the cloud to take advantage of its cost benefits and massive scale," said Mr Mar Kheng Kok, project leader and senior lecturer at NYP.

"Due to the open nature of the clouds, there is an increased risk of them being attacked," he said.

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