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**Headline: New cyber-security competition for tertiary institutions launched**

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The Cyber Investigators' Challenge is a free one-day event, where students, in teams of two, solve real-life scenarios across platforms such as computers, gadgets and internet-of-things devices to outwit "criminals" and quickly find evidence to stop them. PHOTO: SGCSC.SG

Hariz Baharudin

SINGAPORE - A new cyber-security competition for students of tertiary institutions was launched on Tuesday (July 16) to encourage interest in the field, amid the dearth of talent in the field in Singapore and the mounting threat of online attacks.

The Cyber Investigators' Challenge is a free one-day event, where students, in teams of two, solve real-life scenarios across platforms such as computers, gadgets and Internet of Things (IoT) devices to outwit "criminals" and quickly find evidence to stop them.

Co-organised by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) and the Singapore Cybersecurity Consortium, the challenge is open to all students from the Institute of Technical Education (ITE), junior colleges (JC), polytechnics and universities in Singapore.

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Fifty teams took part in the competition held in conjunction with the RSA Conference 2019 Asia-Pacific and Japan at the Marina Bay Sands Convention Centre.

The winning pair was Mr Sim Cher Boon from the Singapore Management University and Mr Lee Zhen Hao from the Singapore Institute of Technology.

Senior Parliamentary Secretary for Home Affairs Amrin Amin, who announced the competition at the conference, said: "Through the Cyber Investigators' Challenge, we hope to generate interest among the young in the cyber and digital forensics profession and attract more budding enthusiasts and talent into this sector.

"At the same time, this serves as a platform for them to challenge themselves and put their skills to the test."

He pointed out that the Cyber Security Agency of Singapore has warned that the Republic is set to face a potential shortage of up to 3,400 professionals next year. This shortage, he said, is not just limited to Singapore, but is also a problem worldwide.

"Therefore, to develop a sustainable pool of skilled practitioners to meet our cyber and digital forensics needs, we must start now to groom young and passionate professionals," he said.

This comes after news last week that all upper primary school pupils will take coding enrichment classes from next year to expose them to the skills needed to embrace new opportunities in the digital economy.

Over the past year, both private and public organisations in Singapore have been hit by cyber attacks.

Singapore's worst cyber attack was in June last year, when hackers got into the database of public healthcare cluster SingHealth and stole the personal data of 1.5 million patients and the outpatient prescription information of 160,000 people, including Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong.

A study by cyber security provider Carbon Black in April said that of the 250 company leaders and executives polled, only 4 per cent said their organisations have not suffered close to four cyber attacks in the last year.

There is also a need to "beef up" government capabilities to stay ahead of cyber threats, said Mr Amrin, adding that the wide availability of digital technology such as IoT devices and sensors make cyber security no longer a technology issue.

He pointed out that the MHA is setting up a Home Team Science and Technology (S&T) Agency by the end of this year, which will ramp up Singapore's capabilities to protect itself against cyber attacks.

He also noted that the MHA has also launched a new S&T Associates Programme to attract and develop S&T talent here for this new agency.

"Just as criminals and malicious actors exploit technology for nefarious purposes, our security and law enforcement agencies need to continuously innovate, adapt and leverage on technological breakthroughs to fundamentally change the way we operate or we risk lagging behind cyber threats and malicious actors," he said.

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The annual conference is on till Thursday and sees cyber-security specialists from around the world gathering to learn about current trends and latest technology in information security.