Cyber-security centres to be set up at NUS and NTU, with funding worth $110m

One will be tasked with nurturing talent, and the other with researching cyberthreats

Osmond Chia

Two cyber-security centres will be set up at local universities and receive $110 million in funding as part of a plan to grow Singapore as a cyber-security hub, Minister for Communications and Information Josephine Teo announced on Friday.

Mrs Teo, who is also Minister-in-charge of Smart Nation and Cyber-security, was speaking at the Cyber Security Agency of Singapore (CSA) Cybersecurity Innovation Day, which was held at the Sands Expo and Convention Centre.

The funding, she said, will support a centre at Nanyang Technological University (NTU) tasked with researching cyberthreats to the nation, and a facility at the National University of Singapore (NUS) that will focus on nurturing talent and collaborating with businesses and industry players.

The plan is to help Singapore establish itself in the digital economy market, she said, which is expected to triple to some $1.3 trillion within the region by 2030, according to the Boston Consulting Group.

The cyber-security workforce here tripled to 12,000 people between 2016 and 2022, and is expected to grow further, she noted.

"As long as our regional digital economy grows, there will be a corresponding need for better cyber-security measures to keep our digital systems safe... Singapore is home to a vibrant innovation ecosystem. Companies looking to innovate need talent, technology, an addressable market and access to funding, and Singapore has all of these attributes," said Mrs Teo.

"With our efforts to grow our local cyber-security ecosystem, we will be strengthening this position, and in time fortify our ambition as the cyber-security hub in this region."

The research and development office at NTU – the first of its kind in South-east Asia – will be funded to the tune of $62 million. It will bring together experts from major universities and research institutions to study cyberthreats.

The office will manage grants for new cyber-security projects and focus on threats tied to artificial intelligence (AI), data privacy and other matters, said Professor Liu Yang, the centre's executive director.

The centre will work closely with NUS, which will receive funding to establish the CyberSG Talent, Innovation and Growth Collaboration Centre.

It will focus on grooming more professionals through grants and training programmes, and help

BETTER MEASURES

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MINISTER FOR COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION JOSEPHINE TEO

companies here find business opportunities by identifying the cyber-security needs of the market.

The sharing of priorities between the two centres will help to speed up innovation to combat the cyber-security threats of the day, said Prof Liu.

He told The Straits Times: "A lot of cyberthreats are unique, and you cannot easily buy a solution from commercial vendors. That is why we need to conduct research and development and translate these results into commercial solutions."

The CSA has rallied cyber-security companies to find solutions to emerging cyberthreats under CyberCall, its annual innovation challenge.

The agency urged companies to pitch ideas for cyber-security issues linked to AI, cloud security and privacy-enhancing technology, such as a machine learning tool to scan for bots on webpages.

Cyber-security firm Simulation Software & Technology (S2T) is among four companies that received a grant of up to $1 million for its pitch for 2022's challenge – an AI tool that automatically redacts personal details and images from documents handled by law enforcement investigators.

S2T director Ori Sasson told ST: "In reality, there's a conflict between what an investigator wants to do, (which is) to see as much as possible, and privacy.

"So the solution balances these two by maintaining privacy by default, so that nothing (personal) is shown unless it is related to the investigation."

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