Disruptions to critical services highlight urgent need to dig deep into digital vulnerabilities

Digital transformation needs to be better managed with a greater focus on building a resilient system across the board.

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This recent disruption to some online services in Singapore's banking and health care sectors serves as a case in point, underscoring the importance of strengthening our digital infrastructure.

On Oct 16, 2023, DBS Bank faced a significant service disruption, with its digital banking services and automated teller machines (ATMs) unavailable for more than 12 hours. DBS Bank attributed the disruption to its digital banking services that evening.

Over 300,000 people accessed the digital banking platform, which failed in that time, leading to thousands of outages.

Another incident on Nov 1 affected the Singtel network, where the website of several banks and the health care units of the digital banking app and Internet banking services faced disruptions.

Prolonged outages in telecommunications can cause significant disruptions to people's lives when they cannot access fundamental services.

For example, a nationwide outage in Myanmar's mobile telecoms network caused widespread disruptions to services.

Singapore has made substantial investments in digital transformation, as more services and businesses have moved online.

This is an emblematic example of how digital health care systems can be affected by disruptions, such as those caused by cyber attacks.

The impact of such disruptions can be severe, with financial implications and the potential loss of critical services.

On Oct 17, DBS Bank faced another disruption, with its digital banking services and Internet banking services experiencing outages.

These recent events serve as opportunities to enhance the resilience and security of Singapore's digital systems. The digital banking disruptions and the DDoS attack might have been temporary, but they must prompt a permanent and renewed focus on strengthening our digital infrastructure.

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