

Creating a safer cyberspace through public awareness

CyberSecurity, Malaysia

CyberSecurity Malaysia is a government agency under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation (MOSTI) in Malaysia, specialising in promoting cyber security and Internet safety among Malaysian Internet users.

The agency was established in 1997 as the Malaysian Computer Emergency Response Team, and over the years has taken on additional responsibilities in response to the increasing demand for public outreach, on behalf of the Malaysian government.

Today CyberSecurity Malaysia runs the Cyber999 Help Centre for Malaysian Internet users, detecting and responding to computer security incidents. It also provides safety tips, advice and specialist services

in the fields of cyber security, such as digital forensics. In addition, it runs a training centre for professional certification; manages the outreach programme and is the sole certification body for Common Criteria (ISO15408) in Malaysia.

In 2009, CyberSecurity Malaysia set up the CyberSAFE or 'CyberSecurity Awareness For Everyone' initiative and information portal as part of its public outreach activities on behalf of the government of Malaysia.

CyberSAFE is an initiative aimed at educating and enhancing the awareness of the general public on the technological and social issues facing Internet users,



Image: source

CyberSecurity Malaysia has organized a number of conferences around the world to promote internet safety

particularly regarding the dangers they need to be aware of online. It aims to impart practical knowledge and provide the necessary information and resources to a wide spectrum of the community. This will then enable them to make informed choices and deal with cyber security issues on their own.

The timing could not have been better. According to the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission – the national regulator – the latest statistics for 2009 put Malaysian Internet users at 16.9 million out of a population of 28 million, a significant and rapidly growing figure that now stands at 60 per cent of the population. In addition, there are 30.4 million cellular users, out of which 7.4 million are 3G data service subscribers.

Furthermore, in terms of household broadband penetration, Malaysia now stands at 33.2 per cent or 2.07 million households, and the government has an aggressive and ongoing national broadband initiative, which aims to increase that number to 50 per cent household broadband penetration, or 3.2 million households by the end of 2010.

Concept and rationale

In view of the rapid development of broadband availability and the associated increase in connected citizens, CyberSecurity Malaysia's CyberSAFE outreach initiative is both an online and offline (via seminars and talks) campaign, targeting Malaysian Internet users from all walks of life. This includes parents, teachers, children, students, youths, adults as well as organisations.

Based on the national statistics, there has been an exponential increase in the number of Malaysian Internet users in the last few years. This is backed up by statistics compiled by CyberSecurity Malaysia that suggest more and more people are falling victim to cyber incidents and cyber crimes. In 2009, the number of cyber incident cases reported to Cyber999 Help Centre soared to 3,564, compared to 2,123 in 2008 and just 74 in 2007.

It was thus decided that CyberSecurity Malaysia should focus more on increasing awareness among the public. As a result, it began development work on the CyberSAFE initiative at the end of 2008. Interestingly, the cyber issues that needed to be highlighted were not only technical issues but also social, financial and emotional ones.

The CyberSAFE outreach initiative set out to communicate three important messages to the public. Firstly, cyber safety and Internet security are social issues, and not just cyber issues. Thus, they involve all Malaysians and should be treated just like any other social issue. Furthermore, it is important to impress upon the general public that online safety is the responsibility of everyone.

Secondly, cyber security should be seen as the equivalent of personal security. Therefore, one has to take similar proactive steps and practise good, positive habits whenever online. Malaysians must be more cyber security-conscious and one of the best ways this can be achieved is by helping each other, reminding each other and telling each other about safer computing habits. To this end, CyberSAFE.my was set up to be a reference library and a portal for best practices.

Finally, any Malaysian citizen who falls victim to cyber security breaches or any illegal activity in cyberspace can find a way out and doesn't need to suffer in silence, as they are not alone. They should turn to authorities like CyberSecurity Malaysia, which has been set up to educate and protect citizens.

Online outreach

In 2009, CyberSecurity Malaysia set up CyberSAFE.my as a resource for all Malaysians to learn more about computer safety – from tips, posters, interesting videos, online contests and other resources on cyber security and safety.

Some of the issues and best practices addressed include good online chat and social networking habits; safe Internet banking and online shopping; online investment scams, identity thefts, online fraud and phishing scams; protecting your computer against viruses, worms and other malware infections; cyber stalking, cyber bullying and online harassment; good e-mail account management and dealing with spam; and protecting privacy and personal information online.

The other main components of the site are CyberSAFE digest (WebZines, e-security bulletins, CyberSAFE newsletters and guidelines), CyberSAFE multimedia content (videos, posters, games, quizzes and cyber tools), CyberSAFE Community (CyberSAFE ambassador, learning zone, active zones and news highlights) and CyberSAFE help (Cyber999 helpline, CyberSAFE first aid and speaker request).

On-the-ground outreach

In terms of on-the-ground outreach, CyberSAFE talks were brought to Malaysian schools in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and MOSTI, and involved more than 2,100 school children and 600 teachers. Through these outreach visits by CyberSecurity Malaysia volunteers, school children were encouraged to engage themselves in promoting Internet safety and CyberSAFE to their immediate community.

Another aspect of this outreach is the CyberSAFE Ambassador volunteer programme, a related initiative by CyberSecurity Malaysia to engage the general public in volunteering to help spread CyberSAFE messages.

CyberSAFE ambassadors provide support at CyberSAFE activities or events, assist in the conduct and management of related activities and events, and represent the campaign at designated locations as well as organise sanctioned CyberSAFE activities and events on their own.

Volunteers are given training in several stages to help them understand what CyberSAFE is. They are also provided with all the logistics and content support during their own CyberSAFE activities. Out of the 2,100 students and 600 teachers, more than 200 people of various ages and backgrounds have registered to become a CyberSAFE Ambassador and, to date, more than 70 have undergone the required training.

In order to reach out to organisations, CyberSAFE has partnered with a host of corporate and non-governmental organizations. By 2009, partners included leading Malaysian bank RHB Bank, the Malacca Foundation College, Committee for ASEAN Youth Councils, The National Malay Student Body and Childline Malaysia, an NGO offering helpline services for the young.



Image: source

School children are encouraged to engage in promoting Internet safety and CyberSAFE to their immediate community

To highlight issues related to Internet safety, increase public awareness and discuss criminal tactics and cyber threats posing danger to the public, CyberSecurity Malaysia organised SecureAsia Conference and Exhibition 2009, the Asia-Pacific region's most influential gathering for information security professionals in July 2009. In December 2009, CyberSecurity Malaysia also held the CyberSAFE Dialogue Forum to highlight technical, social and legal issues and challenges under the theme 'Protecting our children online - are we doing enough?'

Going global

CyberSAFE was also set up to have a global dimension to its outreach. To this end, CyberSecurity Malaysia organised a CyberSAFE awareness talk 'Promoting Internet Safety in Schools' in Brunei in May 2009 and participated in the ITU/MIC strategic dialogue on *Safer Internet Environment for Children* in Japan in June 2009.

CyberSecurity Malaysia also participated in the Safer Internet Forum in Luxembourg in October 2009 to promote Internet safety in schools. The organisation sought to establish goodwill relationships with potential strategic partners in Europe by sharing CyberSAFE activities in Malaysia with like-minded individuals and organisations.

Finally, in December 2009, CyberSecurity Malaysia organised the first ASEAN Cyber Volunteers Development Course in Kuala Lumpur

– a train-the-trainer session for 30 volunteer youth ambassadors from ASEAN countries who were then able to spread CyberSAFE messages and best practices in their home countries.

Moving forward

In order to continue the development of its outreach programme and activities, CyberSecurity Malaysia is in the process of developing more localised, digital multimedia content for CyberSAFE.my, including teaching and learning aids on Internet safety.

CyberSecurity Malaysia will also be taking CyberSAFE on a nationwide road show, featuring a mobile learning centre and multimedia exhibition to attract and reach out to more people. These road shows will also capitalise on the CyberSAFE ambassadors, who will be both the community representatives as well as promoters of safer online practices to target audiences.

And finally, with a selection of partners already lined up for CyberSAFE, CyberSecurity Malaysia will be strengthening and enhancing strategic cooperation with them, while engaging and adding yet more technology and community partners to improve the overall programme.