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Deputy CM unveils mascots at CySeck's Cybersecurity month celebrations

The K-Tech COE to host month long cybersecurity awareness campaign

05th October, 2020, Bengaluru, India

CySeck, Karnataka state's Centre of Excellence in Cyber Security, anchored by IISc (Indian Institute of Science) is conducting a month-long campaign for spreading cybersecurity awareness in the month of October. October is globally observed as the cybersecurity awareness month. CySeck is conducting these programmes with assistance of (KITS) Karnataka Innovation and Technology Society. The entire campaign is designed to spread awareness and address the cybersecurity needs of the state government employees and the state's IT assets.

Cybersecurity is gaining increased focus in the government in view of the rapid adoption of IT (Information Technology) solutions for delivering public services. Whilst this has the benefit of providing public services in a more efficient and effective manner, increased adoption of IT also comes associated with significant cyber risks.

The Covid19 pandemic has hastened the digitalization of operations both at government as well as amongst private enterprises. This has also provided opportunities for malicious actors to increase their attacks. After the pandemic has hit the world, as per an FBI report the number of complaints from cyber-attacks has increased up to 4,000 per day, a 400 percent increase compared to before the pandemic. Interpol reported that there has been an alarming rate of increase at cyber-attacks that are targeting individuals, government and major corporations. Malicious actors are constantly exploiting the COVID 19 pandemic situation to deceive and exploit masses through phishing, ransomware and malware attacks. Cyber criminals have launched thousands of "fraud portals" related to the coronavirus and these sites have lured thousands of citizens eager to contribute to the fight against coronavirus into making donations.

The Internet Crime Report for 2019, released by USA's Internet Crime Complaint Centre (IC3) of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, has revealed that India stands third



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in the world among top 20 countries that are victims of internet crimes. There has been a marked increase in phishing attacks since the beginning of the pandemic. Apart from Phishing attacks, we have also seen a surge in malware attacks, defacement of websites, DDoS attacks and most viciously ransomware attacks.

The Indian Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In) has also put out an advisory that explained about the coronavirus pandemic based cyber-attacks, the tactics, attack procedures and best practices to avoid them. According to the report, the majority of the infections are primarily introduced via phishing emails, malicious advertisements on websites and third-party apps and programs. There was also a separate report pointing to an increase in attacks on computers, routers, and unprotected home networks in the present work from home situation.

Bengaluru houses India's IT hub and naturally will also be a favourite target of cybercriminals. Bengaluru continues to be "most at risk" to cyber-attacks. As cyber-crime becomes more rampant and cyber threats increase in complexity, it is paramount for nation states and organizations to become more proactive and cyber aware.

Cyber aware employees are the best defense against cyber risks in any organisation. With the objective of sensitising all citizens and employees of an organisation to cyber risks and making them aware of cybersecurity best practices, October is observed globally as cybersecurity awareness month. The theme of this year's campaign by CySecK is motivated by the same, and therefore is focusing on generating cyber awareness among government employees.

As part of this month-long programme, sessions for senior government officials on cyber risks are scheduled and will be attended by IAS / IPS / IFS / KAS officers, Deputy Commissioners and CEOs of Zilla Panchayats. The objectives of these sessions are sensitizing the officers on various cyber risks that state's IT assets will be vulnerable and cyber security best practices. In addition to these sessions, the programme will also have a phishing simulation exercise that provides state government staff a feel of real-life phishing attack. Such exercises are proven to double employee awareness retention rates as against traditional cybersecurity training. The programme will also disseminate cyber security best practices in the form of storytelling via standees, banners and posters that will be put up at various state government offices across the state.

Honorable Deputy CM, Dr. C.N. Ashwathnarayan inaugurated the month-long programme on 5-Oct-2020 at Vidhana Soudha. The Deputy Chief Minister also announced that the state has initiated work on framing a Cyber Security Policy to address the needs of the citizens, industry, students as well as the state government.



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National Cyber Security Co-ordinator Lt. Gen. (Dr.) Rajesh Pant joined the event online as a keynote speaker. Dr. Pant spoke of the importance of cyber security and the threats to India's critical IT infrastructure from varied sources.

Prof. Narhari, Chairperson EECS Division, IISc and Convener of the Technical Committee of CySecK elaborated on the programme and spoke about the need for cybersecurity awareness sessions for the government staff including bureaucrats and state government employees.

Additional Chief Secretary, Dept. of IT, BT & S&T Dr. E.V. Ramana Reddy, ADGP, CID-Cyber Crime Mr. Umesh Kumar and Chairperson of Karnataka's IT Vision Group Mr. "Kris" Gopalakrishnan were also present and spoke on the occasion.

The Deputy Chief Minister also unveiled the cybersecurity mascots - Rakshaka and Bhakshaka. The Centre Head, Mr. Karthik Rao Bappanad introduced the mascots and explained the idea in using them to increase awareness of cyber risks, promote best practices and dos and don'ts through the form of storytelling.

The closing remarks of the programme were provided by Mrs. Meena Nagaraj, IAS, Managing Director -KITS.

About CySecK

CySecK is the Karnataka state government's CoE in Cyber Security, housed in the IISc (Indian Institute of Science) campus, with IISc as the anchor institute and KSCST (Karnataka State Council for Science and Technology) as the implementation agency. CySecK was setup by KITS (Karnataka Innovation and Technology Society) of the Department of IT, BT and S&T.

The key objectives of the CoE are to promote a cyber-safe and conducive environment for industry collaboration, address skills gap, build awareness and foster innovation in the emerging technology field of cyber security. The CoE will also facilitate standardization and best practices for information security across industry domains, research and development, and technical training programmes in cyber security.