

# NEW LAWS TO STIFFEN DEFENCES AGAINST CYBER THREATS AND BROAD BASED REVISIONS OF REGULATORY INFRASTRUCTURE FOR THE DIGITAL AND COMMUNICATIONS ECONOMY PLANNED

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**Authors: Bill Jamieson, Stephen Soh and Sun Ran.**

## Summary

On 21 January 2016, in an Addendum to President Tony Tan Keng Yam's address in Parliament, the Ministry of Communications and Information ("**MCI**") outlined plans for the next five years to stiffen defences against cyber threats, including the introduction of a new Cyber Security Bill which will give the existing Cyber Security Agency greater powers to protect national systems, such as those in the energy and transport sectors.

This is in response to the growing concern over cyber threats and an increasing number of cybersecurity breaches that have occurred in Singapore over the past few years, affecting both the public and private sector.

## Rising cyber threats

Just recently in January 2016, the Ministry of Education had to issue warnings on fake websites of various polytechnics in Singapore. These websites had been designed to imitate the look and feel of the official websites and the Ministry advised the public to exercise constant vigilance against similar fake sites. Also in January 2016, hackers used the credit card details of an individual, ostensibly stolen through the malware that was residing in his smartphone, to make purchases amounting to S\$12,327 for flight tickets in Europe. This is only one of the 50 over reported incidents since December 2015 where malware posing as a software update for Android smartphones tricked the users into providing their credit card details.

## Current legislation

At present, Singapore's primary cybersecurity legislation is the Computer Misuse and Cybersecurity Act (Cap. 50A) (the "**CMCA**"), last amended in 2013. The CMCA empowers the Minister of Home Affairs to act against cybersecurity threats and also criminalises certain activities including, inter alia, the unauthorised access, use, interception and modification of computers, data and computer services.

## MCI plans to stiffen cybersecurity

As part of the plans to keep pace with rapid technological growth, a Cyber Security Bill will be introduced to give the newly established Cyber Security Agency greater powers to protect national systems, such as those in the energy and transport sectors, from cyber threats. It is possible that to keep up with the "evolving landscape" of cybersecurity threats, the new Cyber Security Bill will set out new categories of cybersecurity offences. Cybersecurity expenditure will also increase to at least 8 per cent of the

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Government's IT budget in the long-term.

In order to keep pace with the demands of the converged Infocomm media space, the Government will review the Telecommunications Act, Broadcast Act and Films Act. Other key initiatives by MCI include restructuring the Infocomm Development Authority of Singapore and the Media Development Authority of Singapore to form two new statutory boards and to complete nationwide transition to digital broadcasting from analogue broadcast by the end- 2017.

## Conclusion

The increasing dependence on IT coupled with the increasing number of incidents involving cybersecurity-related breaches meant that cybersecurity is a key area of focus for the government for the next few years. The Government's efforts to enhance cybersecurity in Singapore and the upcoming review of the regulatory infrastructure for the digital and communications economy show the important role the digital and media space increasingly plays in Singapore's social and economic progress and it will be interesting to see how regulation adapts to meet the challenges and opportunities in this fast-changing area.

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