

# Cyber attacks surge

## ● iGA foiled 27,000 attempts on state entities in 2017

CYBER attacks on government entities have increased by more than 10-fold in the last two years, it has emerged.

Around 27,000 attacks on government systems, managed by the Information and eGovernment Authority (iGA), were prevented in 2017 alone.

This was revealed by iGA chief executive Mohamed Al Qaed at a cyber security assurance management workshop held at the Royal University for Woman (RUW) in Riffa.

The two-day workshop, in collaboration with West Virginia University, which ended yesterday, was held under the patronage of Mr Al Qaed and focused on an array of cyber security management topics.

Mr Al Qaed also said that approximately 59 per cent of data breaches at organisations located in the Middle East were due to hackers and criminal insiders.

"About 98 per cent of our population are active Internet users, with a mobile penetration of about 184pc which is way higher than the world and regional average," he said.

"As the number of data networks, digital applications as well as Internet and mobile users are growing, so do the chances of cyber exploitation and cybercrimes.

"According to a recent survey conducted by Ponemon Institute, malicious or criminal attacks

By RAZAN ALKHAIR

target organisations in the Middle East and the United States the most.

"In 2017, the Information and eGovernment Authority had successfully prevented approximately 27,000 attempts that targeted government systems."

He also said that the majority of the cyber threats originated from countries in the East, namely Iran.

"The amount of hacking and threats in the last two to three years, I can say, increased maybe by more than 10 fold," he told the *GDN* on the sidelines of the event.

Internationally, lots of threats come from the Eastern countries, like Iran, and we reported some attacks from Russia as well, so there

are attacks coming from all around the world.

"Governments are more interested in attacking other governments because the new wars are going to be cyber, as everybody knows.

"The impact of the attack could stop any nation from operating, and it could stop the infrastructure because of the dependencies all governments have on technology."

The *GDN* previously reported that the Bahraini government dealt with over 23 million malware messages from Iranian hackers in the first quarter of 2017. During the workshop, initiatives

taken by the Supreme Committee for Information and Communication Technology (ICT) to tackle cyber attacks were also highlighted.

Mr Al Qaed said the initiatives focused on safeguarding national infrastructure, responding to cyber threats and establishing a legislative and regulatory framework among other things.

"Some of the initiatives, like the establishment of Bahrain's national Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT), Cyber Trust Programme (CTP) by the iGA and Safe Surf by the TRA have been focusing on empowering government employees, citizens, residents of Bahrain and their families respectively with knowledge and information for a safer cyber environment," he added.

The *GDN* reported last month that a plan to set up a centre dedicated to tackling cybercrime in Bahrain was approved by MPs.

The new Cyber Security Centre, which will be tasked with protecting government networks from electronic attacks, will also help members of the public who fall victim to cybercrime and raise awareness of online threats.

"The complexities, tools and knowledge required to protect government systems are more expensive and require a lot of sophisticated skills," explained Mr Al Qaed.

"This is why the Supreme Committee for ICT introduced a strategy for government entities focusing on all aspects of cyber security.

"Co-operation with international and regional entities, as well as awareness, are very important to us, in addition to the technical systems or tool that's needed or the skills required for government employees to protect the government systems.

"The strategy was developed and we are in the implementation phase now."

Leading the workshop was West Virginia University College of Business and Economics management information systems chair, professor and MS business data analytics programme coordinator Dr Virginia Kleist.

Some of the topics discussed included information systems threats and controls, security in networks and compliance management for security and financial benefit among other things.



RUW board of trustees member Khalid Al Dossary, left, Mr Al Qaed, centre, and RUW president professor Mazin Jumaah during the workshop



Mr Al Qaed speaking at the ceremony

## Cattle disease claim refuted

By RAZAN ALKHAIR

RUMOURS of local cattle dying due to a contagious disease have been debunked.

Messages and pictures have been circulating on social media warning people not to consume beef after a number of cows in a farm in Tashan were reported "dead from a disease".

However, farm owner Ali Hassan discredited the reports and told the *GDN* that 10 cows died in his property from overfeeding.

"We usually give them fodder but suppliers had run out of stock, so we resorted to feeding them corn and bread, which caused them to get bloated, irritated and release gas," he said.

"They were also over-eating the food provided, so I think the change in diet shocked their system and caused them to die.

"The amount of cattle coming to the market is vastly increasing, but the stock for their food is very little and this causes a problem especially since Ramadan is coming up."

All 300 of Mr Hassan's cows showed signs of swelling after the diet change and a private veterinarian was brought in to treat the animals, however, 10 of them died.

Hamala's official abattoir own-



Ten cows died at a farm in Tashan from improper feeding

er Abdulrahman Al Muttawa called on authorities to monitor meat production in the country and the facilities available to licensed breeders.

"The cows in the Tashan farm died from overeating, but I have not experienced any such case myself," he said.

"Veterinary doctors provided by the ministry are no longer available, and breeders have to contact private doctors if they are available or resort to taking things into their own hands which creates problems.

"We appeal to authorities to monitor the production of meat in Bahrain and facilities available."

The Works, Municipalities Affairs and Urban Planning Ministry's Agriculture and Marine Resources Directorate also issued a statement refuting claims of an epidemic.

"The Agriculture and Marine Resources Directorate has denied online claims that alleged the cattle died following an outbreak (of a disease)," it said.

"An investigation revealed that the owner of the farm misfed his cows which suffered extreme fatigue.

"When the health of his cows deteriorated he gave them inadequate (treatment) without seeking assistance of vets accredited by the directorate, which caused their death.

"The directorate has urged the public to ignore rumours and allegations and obtain accurate information from official and credible sources."

It also reassured consumers that all preventative measures were undertaken to avert any outbreak of epidemics and protect public health in the country.

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In a few days, 500 top global investors and industry leaders will see our potential for themselves when they arrive for the inaugural Gateway Gulf Investor Forum. They will explore the wealth of opportunities both here and across the GCC.

It is the energy of our entrepreneurial spirit and the warmth of our hospitality that has put us on the path to success. Now we have the opportunity to share this with the world. We invite them to be part of our journey.