CREATING A CYBERSECURITY NICHE

By JO TIMBUONG

KUALA LUMPUR: The International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) believes its new Cybersecurity Lab can help the country carve out a niche in the field of information security.

The lab, a collaboration between the university and applied research body Mimos Bhd, aims to develop new cryptography protocols and realise end-to-end ultrasecure communications systems, as well as offer post-graduate courses in information security.

All the research done in the lab will also help Malaysia produce security solutions that can be used to safeguard its own e-sovereignty, according to IIUM.

Prof Dr Mohamed Ridza Wahiddin, head of information security cluster at Mimos, said the country needs to be more self-reliant to secure its e-sovereignty by developing its own trusted security solutions.

"There are solutions that we cannot buy from anyone else to protect our e-sovereignty," he said.

Aziz Kadir, senior vice-president at Mimos, said information security is a good niche to be in because no other country, except the United States, is fully focused on that technology.

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> PROF DR MOHAMED RIDZA WAHIDDIN, HEAD OF INFORMATION SECURITY CLUSTER AT MIMOS

needs)," he said, adding that Malaysia could make it a national agenda. Aziz said it makes sense to venture into information security, particularly in the areas of e-sovereignty. "This area will become more important as electronic transactions become commonplace," he said.

When that happens, he said, confidential information belonging to citizens and the Government will be online and vulnerable to hackers.

"We need to be smarter than the hackers in order to counter their moves," he said.

Mimos has invested about RM1mil in IIUM's cybersecurity lab and is expected to pump in RM4mil more by next year.

Mohamed Ridza said the collaboration in setting up the lab is an example of a smart partnership between the IT industry and academia.

He said both parties can benefit from jointly developing IT products and solutions.

According to Aziz, Mimos is determined to help build up IIUM as a centre of excellence in the field of information security, and will work hard to achieve that goal.

IIUM is the first institute of higher learning to work with Mimos after the company redirected its focus to applied research last year, following the appointment of Datuk Abdul Wahab Abdullah as chief executive officer.

It is among the 13 universities in the country that have agreed to conduct R&D activities and set up centres of excellence with Mimos in areas such as cybersecurity, grid computing, micro energy, advanced informatics, encryption systems, and wireless broadband.

NEW LAB: A researcher at the International Islamic University Malaysia's Cybersecurity Lab briefing Aziz (extreme left) and IIUM rector, Prof Datuk Dr Syed Arabi Idid (centre).