

Cisco invests S\$25m in cybersecurity centre and first S-E Asian co-innovation hub in S'pore

By Sharanya Pillai
hspillai@sph.com.sg
@SharanyaBT
Singapore

CISCO on Friday launched its first South-east Asian co-innovation centre in Singapore, focused on cybersecurity and the Internet of Things, alongside a new cybersecurity centre of excellence here. The US-based tech firm has invested S\$25 million in both centres, its chief of operations Irving Tan told *The Business Times*. The move was supported by Singapore's Economic Development Board (EDB).

Cisco's Singapore office has grown from a regional business headquarters into a hub to address growing cyber threats in Asia, said Mr Tan. "As you create more smart cities and smart factories... there are economic and social benefits. But we have to recognise that there are more cybersecurity threats we have to deal with," he noted.

When asked whether the HIV registry and SingHealth data breaches had any impact on business sentiment, Mr Tan said: "We don't view it in any way as a deterrent to our presence here. Both breaches can be put down to awareness and process issues." Such high-profile cybersecurity breaches should not hinder companies' di-



Cisco's Singapore office has grown from a regional business headquarters into a hub to address growing cyber threats in Asia, according to Irving Tan. PHOTO: CISCO

gital efforts, Mr Tan added. "The natural tendency is to say, we have an incident, we should slow down... (But) if you slow down, you stifle the progress of the economy and the smart nation."

Cisco's new cybersecurity centre of excellence will host a threat intelligence headquarters and Security Operations Centre (SOC) which will partner the government, industry players and universities.

The company also aims to "close the key talent gap" in areas such as data analytics and managing SOCs, Mr Tan added.

In a speech at the launch, Chng Kai

Fong, managing director of EDB, lauded Cisco's innovation efforts as "foundational pieces" for Singapore's digital economy.

He referenced how digital defence is now the sixth pillar of Total Defence framework. "All of us, including Irving, were brought up with this concept of the five fingers of Total Defence... (Cybersecurity) is so important that we had to grow a new finger... I'm really glad that Cisco is right in the thick of action," he said.

Kiren Kumar, assistant managing director of EDB, told BT that Singapore aims to be a global cybersecurity hub, in part by "attracting leading global cybersecurity companies to collaborate and build regional presence (and) by facilitating their interest to set up in Singapore".

Singapore has "all the puzzle pieces" to

be a cybersecurity hub for multi-national companies, said Jan Ondrus, associate professor of information systems at ESSEC Business School.

But the hurdle is talent, says Lam Kwok Yan, a professor of computer science at Nanyang Technological University. "There is a shortage in almost all areas, including security product development... design and implementation of secure application systems... and professional services to perform risk assessment, forensic and investigation of cyber incidents."

"Expertise in programming, AI (artificial intelligence), blockchain technology and Big Data analytics is paramount and must be included in school curricula in the education system," said Arturo Bris, a professor of finance at IMD Business School.

GOOD CLASS BUNGALOW

Beautifully Designed GCB In Prime Bukit Timah

- Freehold
- Site Area: Approx. 27,320 sq ft
- Situated within one of Singapore's most exclusive residential enclaves, Binjai Park
- Extremely regular, corner plot enjoying 45m wide road frontage
- Excellent move-in condition, perfect for immediate occupation
- Ideal for multi-tier families
- Within 2km to Methodist Girls' School (Primary) and Pei Hwa Presbyterian Primary School

Contact: Capital Markets
SAMMI LIM
Salesperson Reg No.: 10203960
3368 9803

SOPHIA LIM
Salesperson Reg No.: 10226676
9878 2372

Tender Closing Date:
1 March 2019, Friday, at 3pm