

OPENING ADDRESS BY MR TAN KIAT HOW, SENIOR MINISTER OF STATE, MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION, AT THE ASSOCIATION OF INFORMATION SECURITY PROFESSIONALS (AISP) STUDENT VOLUNTEER RECOGNITION PROGRAMME (SVRP) AWARD CEREMONY ON 16 NOVEMBER 2022, 7.20PM

AiSP President Johnny Kho

AiSP Vice President Sherin Lee

SIT Deputy President (Academic) & Provost, Professor John Thong,

Industry partners, proud parents

Award Winners

Ladies and Gentlemen

Introduction

1. Good evening. My heartiest congratulations to the 96 Student Volunteers who will be receiving the Gold, Silver, Bronze, and Merit awards later.
2. The Student Volunteer Recognition Programme (SVRP) recognises youth volunteers for their contributions to improving Singapore's cybersecurity. I am very heartened that since 2019, more than 340 students, from secondary school, JC and tertiary levels have been recognised for their contributions to the cybersecurity community.
3. This requires commitment and dedication. All our Award winners have volunteered at least 30 hours. The Gold award winners have committed at least 150 hours, or almost 3 hours each week over the course of a year. This is not easy when you have to juggle school and other responsibilities. I commend all of you.

Students play an important role in cybersecurity

4. We must take cybersecurity seriously. So much of our lives are spent in the digital domain. Cyber threats are also growing in scale and sophistication. Recent examples like the ransomware attack in Costa Rica and the Colonial pipeline incident remind us that cybersecurity incidents have real-world impact on our lives. New vulnerabilities and exploits are also discovered almost every day. Everyone, including students, can play a role in defending ourselves against cyber threats.
5. Take for example Ms Claudia Chan, one of our Gold Award Winners. As part of the cybersecurity interest group N0H4TS (pronounced "no-hats"), she plans events like STANDCON, an annual flagship Cybersecurity Conference and Capture-The-Flag competition that raises awareness of cybersecurity careers to students.
6. Another example is Mr Skyler Lee, another one of our Gold Awardees. He is a final year student pursuing a Diploma in Information Security Management at Republic Polytechnic. He tracks new exploits and vulnerabilities, and even creates his own penetration testing environment to replicate cyber-attacks.

7. All such contributions and the support rendered by organisations like AiSP, build the community spirit of the cybersecurity fraternity and play an important role to protect our cyberspace.

Cybersecurity is needed for the future

8. We are also doing more to develop our future cyber defenders. CSA’s SG Cyber Youth, of which the SVRP is a key initiative, supports youths like yourselves in your cybersecurity journey. I encourage you to take advantage of these opportunities in the industry to learn from mentors, peers and industry practitioners.

9. For the young men who will be going to National Service soon, the launch of the SAF’s newly established Digital and Intelligence Service is another opportunity to pick up cybersecurity skills while defending our home. As you have heard from Professor John Thong just now, a lot of our cybersecurity graduates are snapped up very quickly, having very good career prospects and rewarding opportunities in this industry.

10. Indeed, the cybersecurity industry is growing and requires a larger and more skilled cybersecurity workforce – from threat intelligence and incident response to forensics and security architecture. In fact, the number of cybersecurity professionals has more than doubled in the last five years from 4,000 in 2016 to nearly 11,000 today. We are doing more – bringing in industry partners to develop cybersecurity talent and stepping up training opportunities for everyone. This can be achieved through CSA’s SG Cyber Talent Development Fund which was launched earlier this year to support industry partners, individuals, and communities in three types of initiatives. These are – community projects to engage and grow the cybersecurity community, initiatives that develop and recognise cybersecurity skills, and programmes that offer cybersecurity training and job placement. To date, we have supported at least 6 projects under this fund.

11. There is much work ahead of us. At the same time, these are exciting opportunities for cybersecurity professionals and cybersecurity-professionals-to-be, like many of you here.

Conclusion

12. The Government is committed to building a safer and trusted cyberspace for Singapore and Singaporeans, but we cannot do this alone. We need a national effort, and look forward to the active participation of stakeholders - professional associations, the industry, schools, students, and all of you.

13. To the students amongst the audience, I would encourage you to explore and consider taking up a career in this exciting and growing field of cybersecurity.

14. On that note, my heartiest congratulations again to all the award winners.
