TECHSPOTLIGHT

Wildfire spread of Malware on the internet

Kaspersky talks about cleaning 'digital pollution' with new techs as world becomes digitised

SHARIER KHAN, *back from Moscow*

THE spread of malicious programmes through the internet has skyrocketed in the last two years as their number exceeded 32 million in 2009 from just two million in 2007. This spread will increase further as it is financially motivated as cyber crime remains extremely profitable and out of reach of the law, according to the gurus of the Kaspersky Lab.

Back in the nineties, when software viruses were just nuisance used to be simple. Back then malicious codes were transmitted via files through floppy disks-- took refuge in the rootkit of the PC. By 2000, worms started spreading through emails, and from 2005, Trojans embedded in web pages started to attack unsuspecting Internet users.

"These threats are financially motivated. You may ask why do they make malicious programmes?" says Chief Technology Officer (CTO) of Kaspersky Lab Nikolay Grebennikov at a press tour to Kaspersky Lab in Moscow before a group of international journalists on December 4. He answers, "because cyber crime is extremely profitable."

Eugene Kaspersky, chief executive officer, Eugene Buyakin, chief operating officer, and Keith Maskell, vice president of corporate business of Kaspersky Lab, and others spoke at the press event that drew more than 30 journalists from all over the world in Moscow. This event was organised as part of the fastest-growing anti-virus company's aggressive drive to geographically expand its market.

They spoke about increasing security threat in the digital world that will not just affect the internet, but also mobile phone and other everyday technologies whichever involves monetary transaction or business competition in the future.
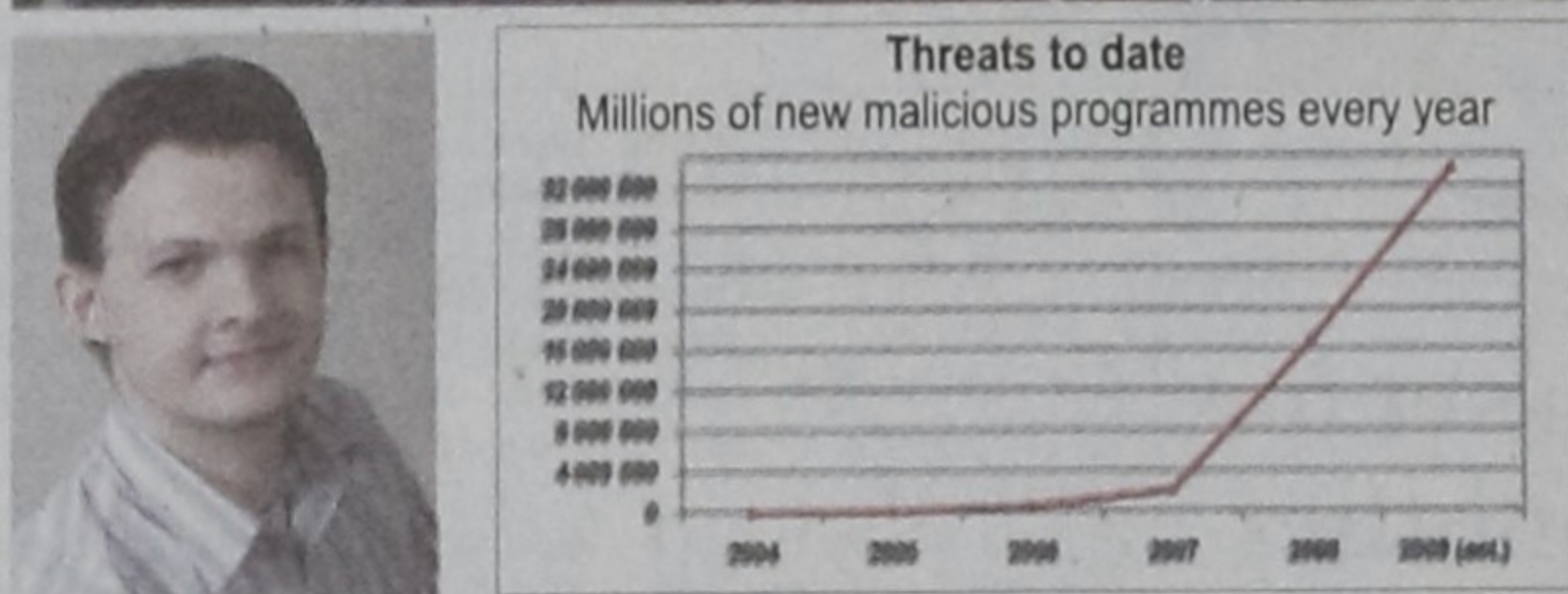
"People do not see money in the Internet. But actually huge money is going to the wrong hands," Nikolay Grebennikov notes.

Much of the malwares are hosted in USA, Europe and some east Asian countrieswith China marked as the world's hottest spot of malware generation.

"Cyber terrorism is on its way. E-espionage is a reality (one business website hires cyber criminals to take down another business website temporarily for financial gains) and cyber wars are coming," Nikolay warns.

Such a scenario calls for widely educating people about the cyber threats, establish a unified global standard to fight cross border cyber threats and keep on developing anti-malware technology.

In this regard, Kaspersky Lab developed new technologies to help fight the ever-complex and evolving malwares. The present tools come with anti-malware protection, control over applications, capability to analyse contents and manageability of the security product.

For instance, Kaspersky offers a "sandbox" utility that gives an environment to allow a suspected software run within it as a test. The suspected software will not affect the operating system when it is run inside the sandbox.

Kaspersky's website "securelist.com" aims at educating people. Its internet-based security solution "Cloud" lets users instantly cross check threat issues related to downloaded programmes.

Kaspersky now has related database of one terabyte containing information about industry leading software, behaviour of software, programme signature etc. Besides it has developed anti malware script hiding technology to combat Trojan embedded webpage and virtual keyboard to safely enter passwords or codes in webpages.

The core technology team of Kaspersky works in Moscow, while it has outsourced non-core technology to other countries like England or China to attract experts in the field.

Chief Executive Officer of Kaspersky, Eugene Kaspersky further illustrates how the digital world has changed our world and why we should be cautious about "digital pollution".

"There was a time where there was no electricity. And when electricity came, our lives had changed permanently. Similarly, once there was no internet. Now with internet, our lives have changed permanently," he said.

"Now younger generation don't buy paperbooks, CDs or DVD. I believe they will not use paper books. They will use digital data. The world has completely changed. Digital life has changed the world like electricity did," says Eugene Kaspersky.

"Unfortunately, there will always be bad guys in this change. The use the system for their needs. In digital world, every e-person (Internet users) can be under attack. Every business is under cyber criminals and every nation and the global economy is at risk," says he.

The good news is nations have started to understand this risk. But the bad news is cyber threats come from beyond the borders.

"The reality is that we have become dependent on the Internet. The remotest African and Amazonian communities are now dependent on the Internet for their health services. Imagine, now if bad guys control 10 million PCs (with self-installed Trojans), they can stop the Internet. Technically it is possible," said Kaspersky.

But users don't take internet security seriously because they don't see the whole picture. Being naive about cyber crime, they are more vocal about freedom in the Internet.

Till now, businesses like banks look at losses caused by cyber crime as a cost of business loss. And governments have other priority things to worry. Internet security is not a priority to them.

Popular operating systems like Windows are flexible and insecure.

Here, security means every application for the OS must be trusted with a digital signature obtained through a certification process. But it is not possible for all software to get certification, as that would reduce the number of applications and OS. This is why Windows have more software than Apple OS.

Supporting flexible software over too secured software, Eugene points out, "remember IBM OS or Novell? We they disappeared."

He adds, if Apple or Blackberry does not change their mindset about their OS, they would also be affected.

As computers have taken over our lives, people are unwittingly dependent on a large number of Oss. "You will see different OS everywhere- in phones, aircrafts, cars and any other electronic appliances," he said describing the extend of risk of being dependent on computers.

Eugene terms the threats as "digital pollution", saying, "it only depends on us the internet security industry to protect the digital world from this pollution." And Kaspersky Lab commits to fight this battle in three ways by high quality products and services, educate everyone about the cyber threats and continue to hammer on developing cyber police through cooperation with others.

From top: Eugene Kaspersky, chief executive officer of Kaspersky, speaks at the international press tour in Moscow. Chief Technology Officer of Kaspersky Lab and Nikolay Grebennikov and malware hosting geography.

Nokia N97
The smartest phone

STARTECH REVIEW

WE waited so long for this device that we waited even more to test it and write a review. But after using it we found out that there are so many things to write that we cannot cover everything in a single review article. But still we gave it a shot.

The Nokia N97, the flagship Nokia N-series device, is undoubtedly among the best smartphones that came out in 2009. It is one of the most powerful, smartest and fully featured phones that Nokia came out till date.

When we first heard about the N-97, we could not wait to get our hands on the product and in this review, we shall tell you how we used it and how it performed.

Nokia N97, with its large touch screen display has created craze and additionally the slide out full QWERTY keyboard just makes the experience even better. Having a physical keyboard makes it great for heavy texters.

When camera phones first came out it made photography very easy. Then we needed to transfer the images to a PC and upload them on our Facebook accounts. Image qualities of N-97 are just brilliant with the 5 Megapixel camera having Carl Zeiss lens. Its Facebook and Ovi application made photos uploading and sharing very handy.

The Facebook application also lets you stay connected all the time with friends and the home-screen Widgets make them even better. The N97 has the best homepage widgets implementation that we have seen so far. On many phones, widgets are messy, but Nokia has done a good job at maximising the use of screen space and the best part is that you can customise it according to your taste.

The outlook of the phone is amazing. The big touch-screen is resistive and quite responsive to finger presses. The screen is large measuring 3.5 in diagonally.

On the outer side, there's a lock button on one side of the casing, as well as a camera button, volume key and micro-USB connector for mains power. There's a converter to both standard round pin Nokia mains power chargers in the box that it comes with. The best part is that there's a 3.5mm headset connector on the top edge of the casing.

The music playback quality is awesome and there is an FM radio and FM transmitter, which is great while we are walking on in the car.

The operating system is S60 5th edition, and it was first introduced in the Nokia 5800 XpressMusic and feels as if it was designed with touch at its heart. We are confident that the upcoming touchscreen phones will have better touch interface as Nokia continues to improve the touch experience.

The Nokia N-series devices always impressed with their Web browsing ability, and the Nokia N97 does an admirable job. The Nokia N97 has a good browser; it works fine with pretty much all the sites. It is possible to log into Google Docs and view text documents. Adobe Flash Lite is supported. So watching Youtube videos without even downloading the application is possible.

Although the phone comes packed with a bundle of apps, you can also go to the Ovi Store and download as many apps you want. The store offers a variety of them.

The N97 is also an interesting device for games. Its design allows you to play with either the touchscreen, or with the arrows on the left side of the QWERTY.

The Ngage application is not installed by default but you can download it. Otherwise, to play, download games on Ovi Store, the catalog is still small at the moment but will grow quickly!

The features list of N-97 is long. There is 32GB of internal memory. Wi-Fi supplements HSDPA, and Bluetooth is there too. GPS and a digital compass are built in. There is a huge array of built in apps including the BBC iPlayer, YouTube player, Nokia Maps and - at last - an Ovi Store link. QuickOffice is here, too, for viewing Word, Excel and PowerPoint documents and there is a PDF viewer.

At the end we can say that this is just the beginning of a long series of features of the N97 and to conclude we have no other option but to say that if you still haven't experienced it, go to the nearest Nokia Store and get your hands on this awesome device.

TECHNEWS

Samsung holds Superstar grand finale

STARTECH DESK

SAMSUNG Electronics, a mobile handset manufacturer, held the grand finale of 'Samsung Super Star Contest' on December, 7 at Hotel Sheraton Dhaka, says a press release.

'The Samsung Superstar' is a venture to promote the upcoming singing talents of Bangladesh, which coincides with the recently launched Samsung Beat Disco M2513 mobile phone.

In the opening speech, Lee, Managing Director of Samsung Dhaka Office, said "This kind of initiative has been taken by Samsung to promote the singing talents of Bangladesh as well as the launch of the new music edition phone. We are confident that this will give a new meaning to the brand image of Samsung Mobile in this Country".

Zakiullah Shahid, Managing Director of Electra Telecom BD, authorised reseller of Samsung products, hoped that the contest would help find out real singing talents of the country and give them hope to reveal their talents in near future.

As part of the launch campaign, auditions for the singing contest were held at Bangabandhu International Conference Centre (BICC) from September 9 to 11 this year.

A total of 10 finalists were selected to perform in the grand finale of the Superstar contest.

"In any competition there will be only one winner, but our objective is to find out the hidden singing talents and help them to make a path to be successful in the future. Thus we have ten new talents", the release said.

Md Shamsul Alam Chomok clinched the esteemed competition and won Tk. 1, 00,000 and a Samsung Beat DJ Touch Screen Phone, while each of the nine finalists received a Samsung Beat Disco Phone.

Partho Barua, Fahmida Nabi and Hyder Hossain were the judges of the competition.

The winner receives the prize from Samsung team.

Kaspersky now third biggest name in anti-virus solution in the world

Company focuses on emerging markets, appropriate pricing
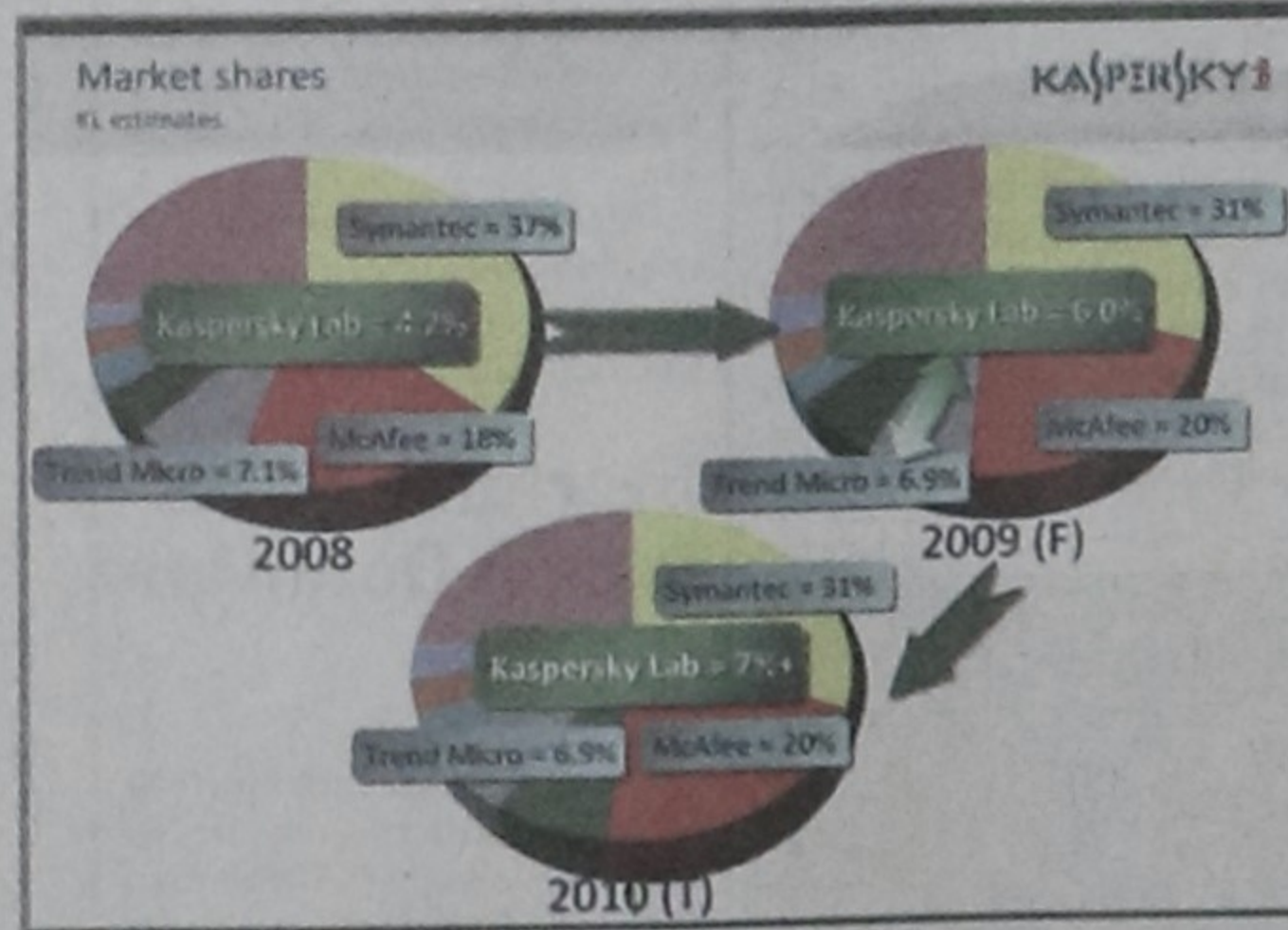
SHARIER KHAN, *back from Moscow*

RUSSIAN based Kaspersky Lab is rapidly rising in the internet security world as an innovative technological leader. Marking a 56 percent growth in 2009 with US 370 million dollars turnover, the privately owned rather small company aims at $600 million dollar revenue in 2010.

According to Kaspersky Lab's Chief Operating Officer Eugene Buyakin, Kaspersky Lab commanded fourth position in the security software segment claiming 4 percent market share in 2008. In 2009, it rose to the third position, behind Symantech and McCafee with 6 percent market share and in 2010, it aims at increasing the market share to 7 percent.

Founded in 1997 and owned by 10 individuals, Kaspersky now has presence in 28 countries. The fast growing company now protects 20 percent of the total internet population or 300 million Internet users.

Once dominated only by American developers like Symantech, Kaspersky made its place by making anti-malware programme that is stronger and more reliable. The company heavily invests in its research and development team. Although its core group is small, it is now geographically expanding its offices due to high sales in the last two years.

"We have invested aggressively in Research and Development. In one year, we have increased our R&D size by 50 percent. To succeed in this industry we have to expand this team," said Eugene Buyakin.

Currently the information security market is worth US 28 billion dollars. Of this web security claims 6 percent share, messaging security 11 percent, endpoint security 25 percent, network security 30 percent, identity and access management 14 percent, and vulnerability management 11 percent.

"The market trend for Antivirus industry is growing. But the classic antivirus technology has become invalid. It demands new technology development and we have the best team in the industry," he said.

"In the future our role will go to information security," he noted.

Kaspersky attributes its growth not just on being able to make new technologies, but also on having good terms with distributors or partners who get better financial deals, strong branding and localisation of products in different regions.

Keith Maskell adds, "to us, partnership means family- its not just business. We are organically growingnot growing through acquisition of other companies. We do not sell our products directlybut through our distributors and partners, so that they make good profits too."

Vice President of Marketing Roger Wilson adds, "our competitors give the partners less margins and not-so-great treatment. But our relationship with them is different."

"Traditionally American companies have huge home market to put their focus in. But Kaspersky Lab's home market is small. It can't make a business just depending on the home market. So it rolled out... Now its management team is also international in nature," said Wilson, who is from England.

Regarding Kaspersky's strong focus on the emerging market where it customises software package along with a price tag suitable for the economies, he said that developing countries have over taken developed countries in telecoms technology. For instance, Africa is dominantly all wireless.

With this in mind, Kaspersky went for a big drive in the Asian markets giving the campaign a local flavour. For instance, it used Jackie Chan for advertisement which appealed to not just China or Japanbut also in other Asian countries.

Wilson notes, "we just started in developing nations. There are huge potentials. Internet is going to change life there."

*A chart presented at the event shows the market shares of different security software companies, **left. Right: from top,** Kaspersky Lab's Chief Operating Officer Eugene Buyakin and Vice President of Marketing Roger Wilson*