A GOVERNMENT agency has been set up to safeguard Singapore against terror attacks and espionage through the Internet.

The Singapore Infocomm Technology Security Authority (Sitsa), which starts operating today, will be the national specialist authority in securing the country against infocomm-technology (IT) threats.

It will come under the Ministry of Home Affairs’ (MHA) Internal Security Department.

Its creation comes in the wake of crippling cyber-attacks in recent years on websites of governments and major organisations in countries such as Estonia, Georgia and the United States.

In some cases, these attacks disrupted government correspondence and online banking.

For example, in July this year, 11 South Korean websites, including those of its president’s office and Parliament, crashed after a barrage of cyber-attacks that appeared to be linked to North Korea.

They underscore the need for the agency, said an MHA spokesman. The agency will beef up Singapore’s cyber-defence capabilities by roping in private-sector professionals to toughen the existing national infocomm infrastructure.

It will also improve Singapore’s response against cyber-attacks through regular simulations that test the country’s ability to respond and recover from online attacks.

Terrorism and IT experts lauded the launch of the new agency as “timely”, as governments, criminal syndicates and terrorist groups are wielding increasingly advanced IT capabilities, which pose greater threats to online security.

Professor Rohan Gunaratna, who heads the Nanyang Technological University’s International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research, said that the main threats to Singapore’s IT security are governments seeking out state secrets, and global criminal syndicates out to steal personal and corporate information.

He added: “The Government understands the growing threat and wants to stay a step ahead.”

Mr Ilias Chantzos, a director of government relations at IT-security firm Symantec, said that cyber-security is a global problem, with “a mature and thriving underground economy” dealing in various Web services used to launch cyber-attacks.

These include vandalism, disruption of services and information theft.

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HELPDESK

Espionage: 间谍活动
Disrupted: 扰乱 rǎo luàn
Simulations: 模拟 mó nǐ
Criminal syndicates: 犯罪组织 fàn zì zǔ zhī

HOW TO PLAY

Cubedron

Players have to tilt a sphere containing a cube to align the cube’s puzzle pieces by colour. An original puzzle concept.


Shady Puzzle

Players have to figure out how many squares in a grid they have to shade with the help of number clues. An original puzzle concept.

How much: $16.90 from major bookshops and www.shadypuzzle.com

Intelligence Quiz

Players are presented with a scenario and have to figure out the solution with the clues given. Inspired by Einstein's Intelligence Quiz.

How much: $7.90 from major bookshops and www.easyapps.sg

Shape Quiz

Players have to rearrange a given set of shapes into specific patterns. Inspired by the classic T puzzle.

How much: $7.90 at www.easyapps.sg