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## CyberDSA signals Malaysia's turning point in cyber defence



Axiata's Cyber Fusion Centre is a research and exposure- management hub that maps out the scale of data leakage today

Wednesday, December 3rd, 2025 at [News](#) | [Technology](#)

**Inside the push for simpler awareness, stronger systems and shared responsibility**

by **SHAHNIN AIZAT NOORSHAHIRIZAM**

**CYBERSECURITY** conferences often brim with jargon-laden presentations, technical demonstrations and earnest warnings that are usually aimed at the professionals who already understand them.

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But this year's Cyber Digital Services, Defence & Security Asia (CyberDSA), Malaysia's flagship cyber defence and security exhibition, introduced something urgent: A unified call to speak plainly.

Digital Minister Gobind Singh Deo stood before representatives of government agencies, industry heavyweights, foreign missions, telcos and homegrown cybersecurity innovators with a simple challenge to strip the language of cyber defence down to what ordinary Malaysians can understand.

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It was a call that resonated across the exhibition halls, from the start-ups clustered around demo pods to the telecommunications giants who shoulder the burden of securing millions of customer records. For many, it marked a shift in tone where cybersecurity is no longer a niche technical domain, it is now a national survival skill.

Syntx Sdn Bhd founder and CEO Fadzril Azhar Md Fatin said at the end of the day, it is about securing humanity.

"It's about defending our democracy," he said. Syntx is one of Malaysia's rising homegrown cyber threat intelligence firms.

CyberDSA 2025 was, in many ways, a barometer of how far Malaysia has come and how much further it must go in building the digital trust infrastructure needed for a society where nearly everything now hinges on a screen, a biometric scan, or a behavioural pattern stored somewhere in the cloud.

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Gobind (fourth from right) challenges agencies, industry and cyber innovators to simplify cyber defence for all Malaysians

#### Younger, Digital-native Malaysia, Surge in Online Risk

Today, Malaysia counts 34.9 million internet users, a figure that exceeds the actual population.

The country ranks among the most digitally active societies in the region, with high penetration in online payments, e-commerce, social media adoption and mobile connectivity.

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That expansion has also brought a sharp rise in cyber threats. Cyber crimes, including digital scams, identity theft, data breaches and corporate intrusions, have grown more complex, more targeted and more automated.

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CyberDSA showcased the breadth of challenges, including artificial intelligence (AI)-driven scams, deep fakes, compromised application programming interfaces (APIs), cloud vulnerabilities, phishing-as-a-service kits and sophisticated ransomware groups.

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Yet the contrasts were striking. On one end of the hall, global vendors demonstrated machine-learning-driven detection systems.

On the other hand, Malaysian consumers were still struggling with scams based on spoofed phone calls and fake police officers. The issue, for many, comes down to awareness and a lack of plainspoken communication.



Syntx supports the National Anti-Scam Movement, using CyberSAFE seminars to explain malware and scams to the public

**Syntx: Malaysian Intelligence for Malaysian Threats**

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For Fadzril Azhar, the cyber problem begins long before the attack takes place.

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Syntx, founded in 2019 and headquartered in Cyberjaya, specialises in cyber threat intelligence (CTI), a branch of cybersecurity focused on studying the motives, techniques, tactics and procedures (TTPs) of threat actors.

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"It is the art of understanding threat actors. We translate those insights into contextualised information that our clients can use to defend themselves before the attack happens," he told *The Malaysian Reserve (TMR)*.

Syntx's clients span government agencies, banks, telecommunications firms, transportation operators and Malaysian conglomerates – industries where the stakes of a breach are national, not merely financial.

The company's work sits in the background. It does not run flashy dashboards for consumers or offer packaged antivirus tools.

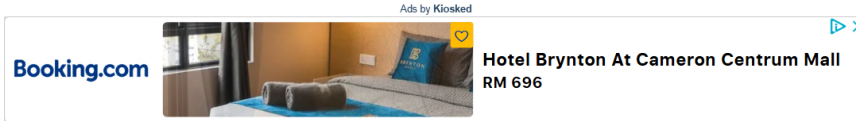
Instead, Syntx embeds itself into the structural backbone of organisations, helping them identify vulnerabilities before attackers exploit them and in several cases, it has had to jump in after the damage was already done.

Fadzril Azhar recalled one of the most significant incidents Syntx was pulled into between 2023 and 2024, involving a

major breach with a government-related agency.

He declined to name the victim but described a complex infiltration.

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"The initial investigation found that a lot of their internal systems had been infiltrated. The attacker had taken over access," he said.

Syntx performed digital forensic investigations, analysed server logs and enumerated all malicious activities inside the compromised network. They identified the point of entry, the attacker's movement and the tools used.

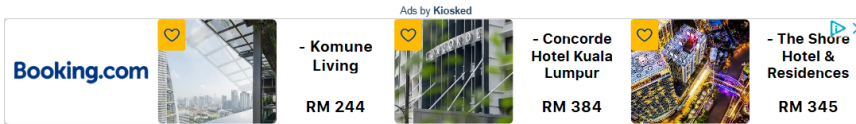
It took between four and eight weeks, an unusually long timeframe that reflected the scale of the intrusion. Smaller incidents, he said, can sometimes be resolved in mere hours, but only if the organisation has proper visibility and skill sets in place.

What was more troubling was the timeline.

"From our experience, the attack had begun 12 to 18 months before the victim even knew," he said.

Fadzril Azhar said dormant intrusions are now common. Attackers breach first and wait silently and strategically, until they are ready to "hit the red button."

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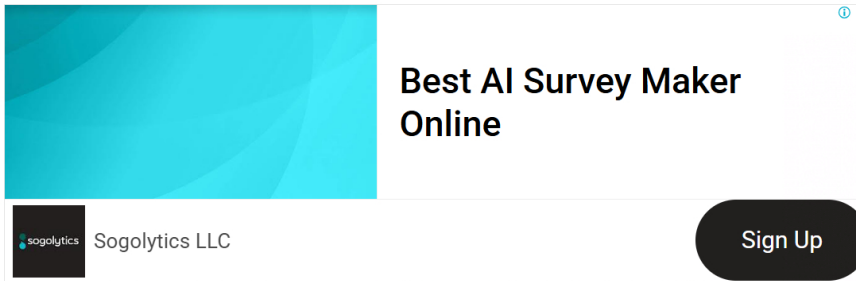


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Maxis invests heavily in advanced data protection systems

### The Missing Link: People, Not Just Systems

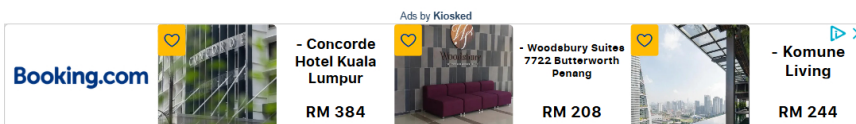
While Syntx provides sophisticated tools such as threat intelligence platforms, extended detection and response systems and rapid forensic capabilities, Fadzril Azhar emphasised that technology is often not the weak point. Human behaviour is.

"As we digitalise, it is imperative that people understand the basic rules and hygiene of being online.

"Avoid pirated software. Update devices. Use proper security settings. Be sceptical. Attackers are evolving every day," he said.

This reflects the core message Gobind highlighted, which is that speaking in simpler language is not condescending, it is necessary. And companies like Syntx have taken that to heart.

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Despite being a commercial firm, Syntx has positioned itself as a champion of national cyber awareness, investing in programmes that reach beyond its client base.

One of its key contributions is the Malaysia Cyber Security Camp, a long-running initiative designed to give school leavers and university graduates hands-on exposure to cyber security.

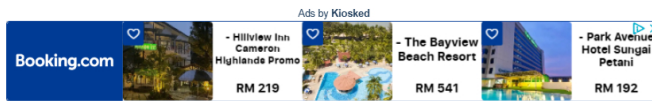
"We have supported the camp since 2022. It gives participants real-world knowledge they need before entering the industry," Fadzril Azhar said.

Syntx is also involved in the National Anti-Scam Movement, contributing to nationwide seminars under CyberSAFE where its analysts break down malware behaviour and scam patterns to help the public avoid falling victim.

This commitment reflects a form of corporate citizenship that is increasingly expected from cybersecurity firms, because the threats affect everyone. Telecommunications companies, meanwhile, operate under a different kind of pressure.



CyberSecurity Malaysia drives the nation's cyber defence push, promoting simpler awareness, stronger systems and shared responsibility



Public suspicion, often amplified by sporadic leaks, has long painted telcos as careless stewards of personal data.

Maxis Bhd chief enterprise business officer Prateek Pashine pushed back against this narrative, insisting that the company treats customer information with absolute seriousness.

"Our customers' data is their data. Nobody should be able to use it for commercial purposes. We fiercely protect it," he said.

Maxis' cyber security approach rests on a combination of public education and technological safeguards.

Through its Nadi community centres, the telco has spent nearly a decade bringing AI, digital literacy and cybersecurity training to Malaysians in both rural and urban areas.

Behind the scenes, Maxis invests heavily in advanced data protection systems – Prateek said he could not recall any major incidents – and has developed telco API technologies that enable number verification, location verification and anomaly detection.



These tools now support banks in spotting fraudulent transactions. For instance, when a card is used in the Netherlands while its owner is physically in Malaysia, Maxis' system detects the discrepancy and alerts the bank.

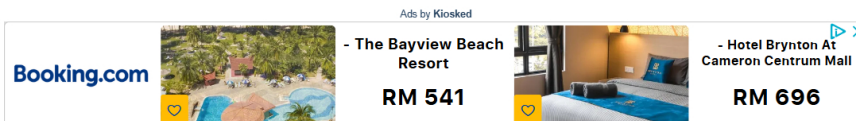
The company sees cybersecurity not as a cost centre but as a revenue enabler.

"The business of tomorrow will only exist if it is backed by trust, which will come through security," Prateek said, warning that failure to invest leads to far greater financial and reputational harm.

If Syntx represents homegrown intelligence and Maxis anchors mass consumer trust, Axiata Group Bhd operates at the regional enterprise layer with enormous data infrastructures spanning multiple countries.

Axiata's head of cyber security and data privacy Suresh Sankaran Srinivasan said the biggest gap in Malaysia remains awareness.

He recalled how regulators, policymakers and industry leaders often react when they visit Axiata's Cyber Fusion Centre, a research and exposure-management hub that maps out the scale of data leakage today.



"They are shocked. Surprised is an understatement," he said.



CyberDSA 2025 highlights that cyber security is now a responsibility for all Malaysians

The centre's in-house platform routinely uncovers personal data scattered across the open, deep and dark web including breached credentials, leaked passwords and fragmented details of individuals hidden across neglected digital platforms.

These exposures affect not only enterprises but also everyday Malaysians, many of whom unwittingly put themselves at risk.

One major culprit, Suresh noted, is the widespread use of single sign-on features – the “Log in with Google” or “Log in with Facebook” buttons that appear on many apps and websites.

“People think it is just a convenience. But when you click those buttons, you are consenting to third-party websites to fetch your data from Alphabet Inc’s, Google or Meta Platforms Inc,” he said.

Most Malaysians have never reviewed how many apps they have granted such access to, and some have authorised dozens, if not hundreds.

When combined with dormant mobile apps, unused social media plug-ins, outdated permissions and devices stuffed with sensitive content, ordinary users end up giving

away pieces of their digital lives to unknown parties without realising it.

Axiata’s research also shows that attackers are increasingly exploiting human behaviour rather than technological flaws.

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Digital arrest scams, where fraudsters impersonate police or bank officers, continue to prey on vulnerable groups, sometimes with fatal consequences.

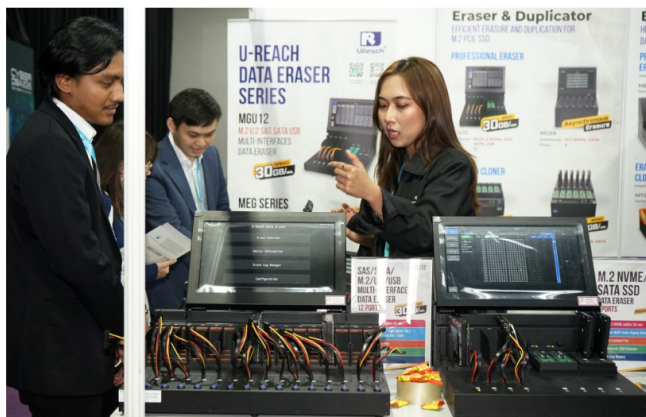
Meanwhile, deepfake voice and video scams are rising sharply, blurring the line between legitimate and fraudulent communication.

These trends underline the importance of the minister’s call for simpler cybersecurity messaging – clarity is no longer a matter of convenience but a national necessity.

To strengthen Malaysia’s defences, Axiata regularly collaborates with CyberSecurity Malaysia, the Malaysia Digital Economy Corp (MDEC), universities, regional regulators and law enforcement agencies.

Through Cyber Fusion Centre, Axiata shares intelligence, runs workshops and trains officials. Still, Suresh believed that Malaysia’s next phase must focus on execution.

“Frameworks are already strong. Malaysia is ahead of the curve. What we need now are working groups, task forces that translate policies into daily operational action,” he said, arguing that the country must now operationalise the cybersecurity ecosystem it has already spent years architecting.



An exhibitor showcases cyber security solutions and innovations at CyberDSA 2025

Industry leaders across the board also expressed strong support for the government's national cybersecurity roadmap and Cyber Security Act 2024 (Act 854).

Syntx's Fadzril described the roadmap as "timely," especially as Malaysia rapidly adopts digital identity systems, digital payments, cloud-based public services and data-driven governance.

As one of the earliest developing economies to digitalise at this scale and speed, he said, Malaysia needs clear guidelines to ensure secure progress.

Act 854, he added, elevates cyber security from a purely technical domain to an organisational and strategic priority.

CyberDSA 2025 emphasised one shared conclusion, which is that cybersecurity can no longer remain the responsibility of specialists alone. It must become a national culture.

For citizens, basic digital hygiene is now as essential as road safety. For companies, cybersecurity is no longer optional or an "IT problem" but a core pillar of business continuity.

For the government, industry collaboration is crucial, with execution now taking precedence over frameworks. And for the cybersecurity sector, the message must be simplified, not diluted, so it can reach every Malaysian.

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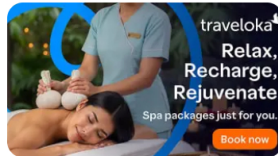
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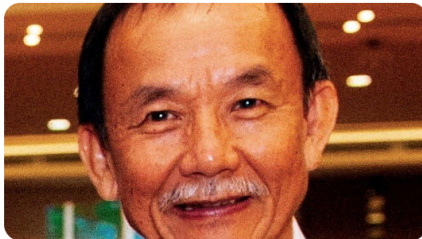
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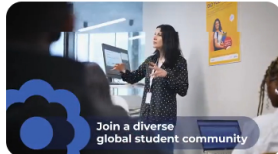
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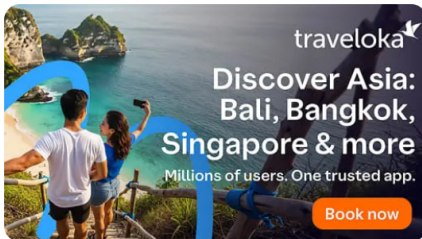
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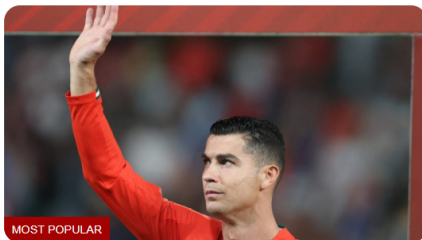
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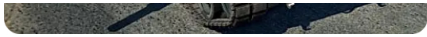


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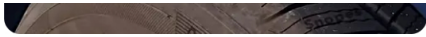


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