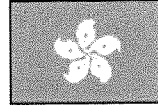


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To Legco IITB Panel (Attn. Clerk to ITB Panel)

BBC 08:12 GMT, Friday, 15 January 2010

Cybercriminals revive old scams to target Smartphones

Many diallers lurk on sites hawking pornography

As mobile phones get more sophisticated, hi-tech criminals are dusting off some old tricks.

Security companies have noticed a rise in trojans known as diallers that used to be popular during the days of dial-up net access.

On a smartphone the diallers are being used to call premium rate lines leaving victims with a big bill.

Experts say the diallers are proving popular as a quick way for criminals to cash in.

Diallers were widely used during the days of dial-up net access when most people connected via modem.

Many diallers lurked on porn sites and, once they snared a victim, disconnected their modem and then placed a long distance call. Many victims were left with huge phone bills.

The economics of international calls meant that some of the cash spent on the call would be shared with the criminals. Some diallers were very sneaky in that they muted the speaker on a modem so victims could not spot when the overseas call was being placed.

Now, the security wing of software firm CA has said it is seeing a rise in diallers for smartphones. This time, instead of calling international numbers, the diallers call premium rate lines and land victims with the bill.

Writing on the CA security blog, Akhil Menon said it was seeing a "an increasing trend of trojan diallers". Mr Menon profiled one such virus, called Swapi.B, which sends premium SMS messages.

"The messages sent out are in the typical format to invoke premium services and land the mobile user with heavy mobile bills without the user's knowledge and consent," wrote Mr Menon.

"There are actually more than 600 mobile phone viruses out there," Prof Barabasi told BBC News. What is more, he explained, mobile phone viruses have reached a level of sophistication in two years that computer viruses took more than two decades to achieve.

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