

VARIETY

No backing off

Nepal-India cyber war might get uglier



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On May 24, a hacker took down the website of Civil Aviation Authority of Nepal (CAAN) and placed an Indian flag along with a message on its home page.

The hacker's message read, "Just because we are silent and we don't react doesn't mean didn't notice." This is one of the few instances of the recent Nepal-India cyber war. This past month has witnessed a barrage of cyber-attacks between unidentified hacker groups of Nepal and India. The back-and-forth digital skirmishing has been called a cyber warfare supposedly orchestrated by cyber extortionists of the two sovereign nations after Nepal initiated a new political and administrative map incorporating Limpiyadhura, Lipulekh and Kalapani. It all began when an Indian hacking group called 'Indian Cyber Troops' defaced the dprobanke website, a government website run by the Botanical Research Centre in

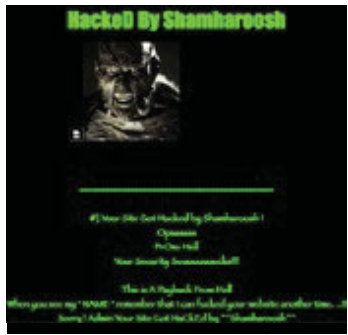
Banka with the message: 'Don't mess with Indians!' In retaliation hacker groups of Nepal were quick to make their moves where a hacker called 'SATAN' divulged fabric's API Key of ABP News. Then an anonymous Nepal-based hacker by the alias Omsec5 claimed to have hacked HDFC Bank's data while also leaking over 2,000 Aadhar card details of Indian nationals. Thankfully, though, as per ICT Frame, a cyber-space-oriented magazine, which has been reporting on cyber crimes and cyber security in Nepal, the Indian Cyber Troops, via their social media handle did try to bury the hatchet. The group's Facebook post dated May 22: "We've talked to Nepali hackers and now we are going to stop attacks. We are brothers. Establish peace," ending with #IaiHind and #Jai Nepal. However, things took a different turn after SATAN posted this on our sites: "We were gonna stop but some kids again started to deface our sites! We can't just sit back and watch. This is just a demo! #BackOffIndia." SATAN's retort has clearly exacerbated the situation. The In-



Screenshot of CAAN website

dian Cyber Troops has clearly taken offence at Nepal's unwillingness to put an end to this warfare further threatening a possible all-out war from many hacking groups based in India. "This will lead to huge loss," reads the Troops' post from May 23. While the damage from incoming cyber attacks can be considerable, so far the assaults perpetrated by the hackers of two nations haven't yet focused on attacking systems directly. Recently, Nepal National Library's

(NNL) website was hacked and defaced by a hacker with alias Shamaroosh. As per Upendra Prasad Mainali, Chief at NNL, the hacker though could only find a way into the website and not the whole system. SATAN's attack on ABP News has been exposed by one Ravj Mandal, a Cloud Engineer at Xamaritars, as being nothing quite harmful. "API Key is identification of a client and not a secret. It is like sharing mobile number with someone else so they



Screenshot of NNL website

can contact you. So sharing API keys is not hacking," claims Mandal.

A country ill prepared

But contrary to these claims, Chiranjibi Adhikari, immediate Past President at Centre for Cyber Security Research and Innovation, and Editor of ICT Frame says it's foolish to assume such acts of cyber crime are non-threatening. "Yes, perhaps the system wasn't hacked, but privacy is being attacked and cyber space failure is apparent," he purports. In Nepal data breaches aren't uncommon but what is lacking is the proper

mechanism to respond to such breaches in security. "When thousands of customer data is compromised, the company responsible to protect customer data should be held accountable. But Nepal's Cyber Law is silent on this matter," he says. As per Microsoft's Malware Infection Index 2016, Nepal was the fourth most malware infection-prone nation. Adhikari fears the country's position might worsen as many Nepalis avoid working from home. It's during crises that cyber security is mostly compromised, and given the pandemic, advocates of cyber security are certain

that cyber assaults will be more lethal and frequent as unethical hackers, the black hatters will be looking to strike when the iron's hot.

During the 2015 earthquake, Nepal had seen a surge in cyber attacks mostly email scams requesting donations for fraudulent charitable organisations with attachments directing users to malware infected websites. Back then, it was the US-CERT that had made the Nepali government aware of such activities. In the wake of the pandemic too, such scams have started circulating and with Nepal-India cyber warfare, cyber assaults are expected to rise.

The black hatter: SATAN

KATHMANDU: Cyber extortionist the anonymous SATAN has over time garnered polarising responses from IT professionals and commoners alike. At times he has been seen as a hero exposing Nepal's vulnerability to cyber threats, while more often than not has come off as a notorious villain compromising thousands of sensitive data.

As per ICT Frame, a cyber-space-oriented magazine, which has been discretely reporting on cyber crimes and cyber security, via his/her twitter handle on April 13, the hacker informed Darzi of its

heroic acts in bringing the importance of cyber space security to public consciousness, professionals in the IT field do not agree with the hacker's methods. "Whatever people say, the path s/he's following is definitely wrong and illegal. S/he should inform the website developers about the bugs and not post these things on social media," opines Adhikari. IT professionals like him also suggest Nepali websites introduce bug bounty, an initiative that rewards individuals for discovering and reporting software bugs.—HNS

POTPOURRI

BLONDIE Dean Young and Denis Lebrun



HAGAR Chris Browne



BEETLE BAILEY Mort Walker



BEAU PEEP Andrew Christine and Roger Kettle



DENNIS Hank Ketcham



HOCUS FOCUS Henry Boltinoff



YOUR LUCK

HAPPY BIRTHDAY: Philosophically oriented you are tough and adaptable to this year's new rules, and so you do very well. Finances are excellent and you launch an idealistic project. You learn from lessons parents and go into partnership with another. If single, while aware of your deepest desires and needs, you search for the right mate, but none can measure up. If attached, you are inseparable and have lots of fun together. **GEMINI** is the fittest.

A baby born today has a Sun in Gemini and a Moon in Cancer.

ARIES (March 21-April 19): Others depend on you to make the daily routine more agreeable. Stress levels can build now, so laugh at little problems and take time to relax. You should not generate a series of calls, emails or texts. **TARGET:** Not to be found. **TAURUS (April 20-May 20):** There is still social distancing. Analyse what is holding you back from making your daily life exactly as you want. You discover the solution to a long-standing blockage or problem. Follow laws and rules conscientiously. **TARGET:** Have a yammer with an old pal or neighbour. **GEMINI** is the fittest.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20): You are radiant and vibrant. Ask others for favours and develop new contacts. Love and admiration are on the upswing. A neighbour or sibling relishes a conversation with you. Money comes in. The approval of your natural genius for diplomacy helps. **TARGET:** Not to be found. **CANCER (June 21-July 22):** It is the perfect time to purchase clothes and take care of your appearance. Take advantage of sales today. Life has not changed all that much for you since quarantining began. You are still taking care of everybody. **TARGET:** Take time for a child who needs your help. **GEMINI** is the fittest.

LEO (July 23-Aug 22): Today offers you new philosophies and insights. You are ultra-sensitive to sound and colour. You see how you have used time and resources. Thoughts centre on future goals and wishes. **TARGET:** Put your associates who have complicated your life in the past. **GEMINI** is the fittest.

VIRGO (Aug 23-Sept 22): Use care in establishing a new relationship. A neighbour involves you in a community programme. Your skills in negotiation win needed support. Resist the temptation to socialise even though it is Memorial Day. Avoid danger. Keep good company. **TARGET:** Online networking and chat rooms. **GEMINI** is the fittest.

LIBRA (Sept 23-Oct 22): In many ways, you are going through a renaissance. There are major changes in your self-awakenings. Your willpower is increasing, you are more daring and ambitious than ever before. Do something you have never dared to do. **TARGET:** Polish it off and hit send. **GEMINI** is the fittest.

SCORPIO (Oct 23-Nov 21): Today finds you applying spiritual teachings to your imagination in daily life situations. You will be vital and creative. Your appearance improves, lending strength to your self-esteem. Fortunate luck befalls your personal life as well as your professional status. **TARGET:** A friend does you a favour. **GEMINI** is the fittest.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov 22-Dec 21): Even though it is officially a holiday, it is an ideal time to examine financial documents and decisions. You encounter a sense of déjà vu. You are aware of interconnectedness between the present and other lives at all times. It's a strange day. **TARGET:** Intimate dinner with your partner. **GEMINI** is the fittest.

CAPRICORN (Dec 22-Jan 19): Communication is a delicate matter today. Make every effort to understand and respect the views of others. Moderation is the best policy to adopt in your expectations of others. A loved one needs you now. You will extend initiative. **TARGET:** A real heart-to-heart. **GEMINI** is the fittest.

AQUARIUS (Jan 20-Feb 18): It is a wonderful day to toss out debris, and to get neat and organised. Minimise stress with efficiency. Health factors in the environment need your attention. Pure water is essential. Postpone decisions about love as you go through a change of heart. **TARGET:** Early bedtime. **GEMINI** is the fittest.

PISCES (Feb 19-March 20): Today begins with a joyful euphoria. New love warns the day. The fine arts provide pleasure, especially drama. It is an ideal day to select personal emblems and insignia. You will cherish friendships and have opportunities to deepen them. **TARGET:** Date night with your sweetie. **GEMINI** is the fittest.

Born Today: Escaylet Ralph Waldo Emerson (1802), poet Theodore Roosevelt (1908), actor Ian McKellen (1939) **By Madalyn Adam**

The Stars Show the kind of Day You'll Have: 5-Digitary: 4-Predict: 3-Average: 2-So-so: 1-Difficult

Note: Epigra's Stars is based on the degree of your sun at birth. The sign name is simply a label astrologers put on a set of degrees for convenience. For best results, readers should refer to the dates following each sign.