

Smart Nation scholars seek to champion cyber security

✔ HEDYYANG

He was shocked when he found out that his Amazon account was compromised last year, and he could not even reset his password because the hacker had enabled two-factor authentication (2FA) on his account.

Although Mr Sean Kan eventually managed to retrieve his account, this “sobering experience” reminded him that anyone can be the victim of a cyber attack.

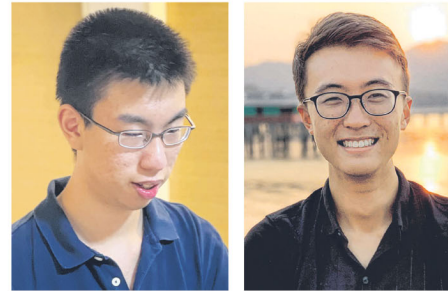
“I was fortunate that I did not lose money and learnt many valuable lessons, but others may not be so lucky,” Mr Kan, 20, told *The New Paper*, adding that he has since used unique passwords and

enabled 2FA for important accounts.

The Amazon account was compromised from a data leak on another website where he used the same e-mail and password combination.

It was this episode that also made Mr Kan, a recipient of the Smart Nation Scholarship sponsored by the Cyber Security Agency (CSA), more determined to pursue a career in cyber security.

The scholarship, which was awarded to 14 young people yesterday and jointly offered by CSA, the Government Technology Agency and Infocomm Media Development Authority, drives innovation in the public sector by grooming the youth to take on leadership roles in these



(From left) Scholars Sean Kan and Tang Boxuan.

PHOTOS: COURTESY OF SEAN KAN AND TANG BOXUAN

three Smart Nation agencies.

Mr Kan will be studying data science and analytics at the National University of Singapore after national service.

Having developed an interest in technology from a young age, he was a member of the science society at Dunman High School and has worked on a coding-related research project under the Singapore University of Technology and Design’s Research Mentorship Programme.

Mr Kan believes that information technology (IT) advancements can be a double-edged sword and need to be carefully controlled, and he hopes to play a part in ensuring cyber security for Singaporeans in the future.

Another recipient of the Smart Nation Scholarship is Mr Tang Boxuan, 22, a for-

mer Hwa Chong Institution student who gave up a career in the Republic of Singapore Navy to pursue his passion in IT.

While he previously joined it under the Dual-Track Combat Officer Scheme – which offers opportunities to alternate between combat and specialist roles including in cyber security – Mr Tang eventually decided that he wanted a career that focuses solely on technology and dropped out before commissioning as a naval officer.

He told TNP: “It was not a light decision, especially since I put in a lot of effort to join the navy’s scheme. Many of my friends were quite surprised, as I am usually a very motivated person during our training, but they were happy for me.”

Born to engineer parents, Mr Tang was interested in coding and computing even as a boy and attended several online courses to strengthen his coding skills throughout the years.

Before heading to Imperial College London in October to pursue a degree in computing, he has taken up two internships during his current gap year – one at a tech start-up and another at the Smart Nation and Digital Government Office.

He said: “Cyber security, unlike other aspects of technology which are focused on innovation, is more like a battleground, and I am excited to join the battle against attackers.”

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