Dear Members

Electronic Commerce is now a way of life. I am glad that this issue of CSI Communication focuses on that. The convenience offered by the ubiquitous and pervasive digital space is irresistible! Be it paying one’s utility bills or transferring funds from one bank account to another or shopping online, e-commerce is everywhere today. Besides, “gen-next” is very comfortable online. Perhaps the irreversible change has set in. It is fashionable today to have online web presence, tweet on a variety of issues, connect using Facebook, generate discussions through blogs, exchange information using email, interact through Skype, and search endlessly for information using Google. Suddenly, we have acquired a fourth dimension – one that we are not used to – perhaps not designed for (!) – Tele-presence stretching itself to Tele-porting. We are walking / jogging / running / surfing / flying through unknown territory without knowing the inherent risk and without understanding “where the liability rests”. Besides, the Cyber citizen of today is not only present ubiquitously in Cyber Space, but also exposed to possible monitoring 24 x 7.

In the month of June 2013, I read several articles about “surveillance by State”, use of “Metadata” for tracking and understanding, endless intellectual polemics on “Security and Privacy” and so on, with great interest (because of my curiosity as an academic) and concern (as a citizen). In fact, by the time this article reaches you, India would have formally unveiled the Cyber Security Policy. New environment would have set in.

Going down the memory lane, I am reminded of the seventies and eighties when the whole world was trying to “network” computers “somehow”. Looking back, I feel that they were done at “trusted” times. There was no concern of security, leave alone privacy. After more than three decades, the rules of the game have changed. What was once considered a promotional and interactive tool in the hands of a researcher has become the foundation of existence of society today. All aspects of human behavior are today mimicked in the online digital society – Philanthropy, Governance, Piracy, Commerce, Entertainment, Societal interactions, Education, Health, Marketing, Advertising, Cheating, Bullying – you name it and it is there in one form or the other. The added complexity is the global nature and the unrestricted jurisdiction that the Cyber Space offers. Now the whole world is working “overtime” to find “quick fixes” to protect against a possible “digital tsunami”. While at it, with a hidden face some individuals and nation states do exactly what they do not want others to do. Result is that our systems are becoming complex and operating procedures cumbersome. The cyber citizen who started off with the careless abandon of a child and is now being forced to be accountable and responsible for everything one does – from absolute convenience to absolute nightmare.

What can Computer Society of India do? Of course, we can bring in awareness by running courses in several forms and formats. Such actions do not go very far. Do we really have a response to this challenge? Being such a large body of professionals, it has become our “duty” now to find an answer. As I visualize it, collective response from CSI could probably be the answer. Let me share with you my thoughts on this.

As I mentioned in my earlier message to you, students are our backbone and therefore our greatest strength. Even if we harness half of our student membership for this endeavor, we are talking about 50,000 man-years of effort every year! We can completely re-design the Cyber Space including all the hardware and software that is inside the Cyber Space. While it sounds outrageous, it is also a great opportunity in electronic system design. We in CSI can make a huge difference, if we can channelize our student projects for the next three years to focus on Securing Cyber Space. Are we ready for it? National Student coordinator supported by division chairs and regional VPs can do the trick. SIGs are there for intellectual support. We can help automate implementation of “any” policy, if we have control over the way the Cyber Space is architected and built. We can bring about “trust” by design!

Dear members Think about it; talk about it; and finally do something about it. Let us work together for the re-emergence of Trusted times

I will catch up with you soon...

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President
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