

Cybercriminals target fans of shows on big streaming sites

By Patricia B. Mirasol Reporter

STRANGER THINGS fans who chose to watch the mystery series' fourth season on sites other than the official platform have fallen victims to cybercriminals, global cybersecurity firm Kaspersky found.

"Cybercriminals have always ridden on trends to bait unsuspecting victims even before the pandemic," said Yeo Siang Tiong, general manager for Southeast Asia at Kaspersky, in a July 26 e-mail. The pandemic has accelerated on-demand content — providing cybercriminals the opportunity to take advantage of fans' eagerness to watch their favorite shows, Mr. Yeo added.

Netflix was the most popular streaming service used as a lure by cybercriminals, a 2021 report by Kaspersky found. Nine-tenths (or 89%) of the cybersecurity firm's users faced malware (malicious software intended to compromise systems) or unwanted software

while searching for Netflix and related content.

Other Netflix shows exploited by cybercriminals include *The Mandalorian* and *Money Heist*. The two accounted for 28.72% and 28.41% of infection attempts, respectively, between Jan. 1, 2020 and June 30, 2021.

Fans of *Squid Game* and *Spider-Man: No Way Home* were likewise the target of fraud schemes that included Trojans (malware disguised as legitimate software), adware (advertisement-supported software), and phishing (a cybercrime where scammers lure victims by posing as a trusted organization).

In the case of *Stranger Things*' fourth season in 2022, Kaspersky researchers found examples of spam e-mails and phishing pages designed to steal the show's fans' money and personal information.

In one scheme, cybercriminals offered users the ability "to watch the new episodes for only \$1 (P56)." Users were asked to register a new account and enter

their address and bank details to access the offer. After entering the necessary information, fraudsters then drained the victims' wallets without giving the purchased access to the series.

In another scheme, the researchers detected spam e-mails used to sell products of dubious quality, which were spread through promotional e-mails sans the recipient's consent. In one of these e-mails, users were given the opportunity to buy limited-edition *Stranger Things* shirts through a domain that was only recently created.

"Fans need to be careful as trying to save money on a streaming service subscription can lead to them losing much more than they could ever save," Olga Svistunova, security expert at Kaspersky, said in a July 25 press release.

"Consumers of [illegally obtained] entertainment should be aware that these types of websites are a cybercriminal's playground where they disguise their malicious files as useful stuff," added Mr. Yeo.

To avoid falling victim to scams, Kaspersky recommends the following:

- Avoid links promising early viewings of films or TV series.
- Check the authenticity of the website before entering personal data, and only use official, trusted web pages to watch or download movies.
- Pay attention to the extensions of the files you download: a video file will never have a .exe or .msi extension.
- Use reliable security solutions such as Kaspersky Security Cloud and Kaspersky Total Security.

Falling prey to threat actors causes user data to be compromised, Kaspersky said. Your bank details shared on the dark web are like an open Pandora's box, Mr. Yeo reminded.

"Not only can you lose your hard-earned money, your identity can be compromised," Mr. Yeo told *BusinessWorld*. "Also, those linked to you such as your family members and affiliates [can also become] vulnerable to any unimaginable attack."

Cryptoverse: What crisis? Venture capitalists bet big on crypto

IT's not all doom and gloom.

Even as the crypto sector shivers in the bleak winter, venture capitalists (VCs) are pouring money into digital currency and blockchain startups at a pace that's set to outstrip last year's record.

In the first half of the year, VCs bet \$17.5 billion on such firms, according to data from PitchBook. That puts investment on course to top the record \$26.9 billion raised last year, a warmer and happier time for bitcoin and company.

"The current market conditions — I don't think they faze investors," said Roderik van der Graf, founder of Hong Kong investment firm Lemniscap, which focuses on crypto and blockchain. "The capital available is massive."

VC funds offer financing to young companies they believe have strong growth prospects. The data suggest a solid faith in the future of crypto and blockchain tech, despite a bruising six months for the industry.

A double whammy of macroeconomic headwinds and blowups at major projects this year have seen bitcoin plummet about 65% from its November record of \$69,000, with the overall value of the crypto market tumbling by two-thirds to \$1 trillion.

Companies have shuddered as prices fall, with major US exchange Coinbase Global

COIN.O and NFT platform OpenSea among those to lay off hundreds of workers.

Yet some VCs are shrugging off the gloom, with many deploying substantial war chests as their faith in the underlying tech behind crypto coins remains strong.

Though not all investors are so bullish in the face of the crypto carnage, not by any means.

David Siemer, CEO of California crypto management firm Wave Financial, said there were signs of a pullback from the sky-high valuations of crypto firms last year.

"This will get a lot worse — we're a couple of months into this cycle. In the last cycle, the pain for those looking for funding was about 12 months."

AMERICAN HOTSPOT

North America, long the hotspot for VC deals, has again been the focus of activity with about \$11.4 billion in the six months to June, versus \$15.6 billion for the whole of last year.

The numbers contrast with general VC activity in United States, where deals fell to \$144.2 billion in the first half from \$158.2 billion in the same period last year as macro conditions and market turmoil chill investment.

Rumi Morales, director of investments at Digital Currency Group, a major US crypto

investor, said the data reflected increasingly robust faith in the crypto and blockchain sector.

"There used to be existential risk being in the space — that the whole industry was just going to go away, it was all a dream. That is not the case anymore."

Adoption of crypto as an investment tool mushroomed last year, with the use of blockchain also gaining ground — even if the revolutionary changes from the technology promised to industries such as finance and commodities remain elusive.

Among the mega US crypto deals in 2022: \$400 million raised by the US arm of crypto exchange FTX in January; a \$450-million fundraising round by blockchain developer ConsenSys in March; and \$400 million raised by stablecoin issuer Circle a month later.

Activity is strong in Europe too, with \$2.2 billion of VVC investment in the first half of the year.

Lisbon-based Fedi, an app designed to help people receive, hold and spend bitcoin, said this month it had raised \$4.2 million in seed financing.

"Within seven days, we had all of the investment commitments," Obi Nwosu, one of its founders, told Reuters. "And within less than a month and a half, we had the initial fundraising target in the bank. Done." — **Reuters**

The mainstream moment for foldable smartphones is here

By Dr. TM Roh

Samsung President and Head of MX Business

I HAVE worked my entire career as an engineer, and I have seen many innovations at Samsung that have pushed the limits of what's possible with smartphones. Our mission is, and always has been, to create technology that makes people's lives better. Ten years ago, we set out to create a transformative technology by looking at the one thing all smartphones were synonymous with — a flat rectangular display. We asked ourselves a simple question: How can we have it all — a bigger screen and better portability?

We saw an opportunity not only to design a new shape but also to create new experiences that had never been possible with a smartphone before. Overcoming many technological hurdles, we successfully introduced the first-ever foldable smartphone in 2019 and have changed the future of our industry ever since.

Last year, we saw almost 10 million foldable smartphones shipped worldwide. That's an industry increase of more than 300% from 2020, and I predict this fast-paced growth will continue. We are reaching the moment where these foldable devices are becoming widespread and staking a bigger claim in the overall smartphone market.

More importantly, Samsung Galaxy foldables have changed the way we use mobile devices and helped enable better lifestyles for users worldwide.

AS LIFESTYLES EVOLVE, A NEW LEGACY UNFOLDS

The world is more connected than ever and is moving at a much faster pace. Work and play intermix, and the lines between the physical and digital world have blurred. Where we turn for work, entertainment, wellness and more has become a single place — our phone. As such, our users need a flexible device to keep up with their daily demands.

The Galaxy Fold and Galaxy Flip deliver on that mandate. Last year, 70% of Galaxy foldable users turned to the Flip to help them see the world from a different point of view. Flip users love owning a device built for self-expression, whether choosing bold

color options for their device or taking pictures in a new way with Flex mode.

It's a different experience with the Fold. Nearly one out of three Galaxy foldable users last year opted for this ultimate productivity device, which has empowered them to do more through hyper-connected, individual computing. Fold users love the multitasking capability of a screen that doubles in size, so they can be more efficient and get things done faster.

Both foldable users have enthusiastically embraced what we have created. Their response is our biggest motivation to push forward, and that's why we are committed to this journey of seeking new possibilities for mobile innovation.

This year, we've made advancements in every detail and opened the new experiences enabled by these behavior-shifting devices. I am excited to see people to discover new ways to do more of the things they love with the new foldable.

Of course, this wouldn't have been possible without the open collaboration and a shared desire with our partners to continuously bring new innovations to the mobile category. We are working with industry leaders including Google, Microsoft and other carrier partners to expand the experiences that are possible throughout the foldable ecosystem.

REDEFINING WHAT'S POSSIBLE FOR PEOPLE EVERYWHERE

Three years ago, Galaxy foldables could be summed up in a single word: radical. Very quickly, however, it became clear that this groundbreaking, flexible design fit perfectly into modern lifestyles. As a result, what was once a novelty three years ago, is now the preferred choice for millions.

At our upcoming Unpacked on August 10th, you'll see that the impact of our innovation is not only about what technology can do. It's about what you can do. We've once again taken our inspiration from the most important source — Galaxy users — to push the limits of what's possible.

I can't wait to show you the potential of our new Samsung Galaxy foldables as the ultimate tool for both productivity and self-expression. Now, you can do more than you ever thought possible, all at once, on one device.

Get ready to unfold your world.

ICTSI to take majority stake in Indonesian terminal

LISTED port operator International Container Terminal Services, Inc. (ICTSI) announced on Wednesday that it had signed a purchase deal to acquire majority ownership in a multi-purpose terminal in East Java, Indonesia.

The company signed on July 27 a conditional share subscription and purchase agreement with Indo Port Holding Pte Ltd. and Eastlog Holding Pte Ltd. to acquire majority ownership in PT East Java Development, the global port op-

erator said in a disclosure to the stock exchange.

"This transaction is expected to generate synergies and value-accretive returns for ICTSI's shareholders," the company added.

With 47 years left in its concession, PT East Java Development holds the rights to a multi-purpose terminal in Lamongan Regency, East Java.

The number of shares to be acquired is one million for \$46.5 per share.

"The amount of the consideration was negotiated and determined

based on a discounted cash flow method," ICTSI said.

"The purchase price will be paid in cash in multiple tranches over the next year," it added.

The company announced recently that it ranked eighth among global terminal operators in terms of equity TEU (twenty-foot equivalent unit).

In 2021, ICTSI's consolidated throughput increased by 10% to 11.1 million TEUs as a result of the reopening of markets and improvements in trade amid the global health crisis.

The listed port operator saw a 58% growth in its first-quarter attributable net income to \$142.3 million from \$90.1 million in the same period a year earlier.

The company's revenue rose by 21% to \$528.3 million, while its EBITDA — or earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation, and amortization — increased by 28% to \$337.9 million.

ICTSI shares closed 0.43% higher at P185 apiece on Wednesday. — **Arjay L. Balinbin**

Shakey's Pizza group rolls out plant-based menus

SHAKEY'S Pizza Asia Ventures, Inc. is aiming to "future-proof" its business as it turns its healthy, plant-based menus into a company-wide campaign.

"Healthy offerings are a must-have in today's world. We want to become more responsible and sustainable as a company," Shakey's President and Chief Executive Officer Vicente L. Gregorio said in a press release on Wednesday.

"We believe that these will also future-proof our business as consumers become more discerning," he added.

The group started its plant-based initiative by rolling out the Good Menu at Shakey's in late 2020. Its restaurants are Shakey's Pizza, Peri-Peri Charcoal Chicken & Sauce Bar, R&B — a Singaporean milk tea brand, and Project Pie.

In a partnership with unMEAT, a local plant-based meat alternatives brand by its affiliate company, Century Pacific Food, Inc., it launched the Good Burger, which is made with 100% plant-based ingredients.

The meatless burger was followed by Good Nuggets, another plant-based alternative launched at Shakey's stores in 2021. It came with vegan-friendly sauces.

Good Taco Pizza, a meatless pizza made with 100% plant-based unMEAT toppings, soon followed.



FACEBOOK.COM/SHAKEYSPI

R&B milk tea brand recently launched its own 100% plant-based milk tea in the second quarter of 2022 which is made from premium brewed black tea, soy milk, organic coco sugar, and plant-based boba derived from seaweed extracts.

"This healthy innovation has no cholesterol and less calories versus regular milk tea offerings," the company stated.

Meat-free pasta and pizza selections are also available at Project Pie outlets, while Peri-Peri

offers a range called Healthy Eats, a trio of combos offering salad and proteins.

"Building our green menu is a long-term strategy that we are implementing across all our brands, so we will continue to innovate to add healthier, better-for-you options to our offerings as we move forward," the company stated in an e-mail.

On the stock market on Wednesday, shares in Shakey's inched lower by P0.02 or 0.28% to P7 apiece. — **Justine Irish D. Tabile**

Solaire tops off second property

SOLAIRE Resort & Casino has topped off its second property located in Vertis North, Quezon City which will cater to the luxury integrated resort's market in the northern and eastern parts of Metro Manila.

Solaire Resort North had its topping-off event on July 25, making it the latest addition to the Solaire brand of Bloomberry Resorts Corp.

"Solaire Resort North is Quezon City's first 5-star destination built to promote the city's tourism sector and local economy," the company said in a press release on Wednesday.

Bloomberry's flagship property, Solaire Resort & Casino, is in the government-sponsored economic development zone known as Entertainment City in Parañaque City.

The second property is expected to offer a hotel, gaming, restaurants and bars, meeting facilities, and retail spaces like the pioneer development.

The project is in partnership with DMCI Holdings, Inc., Prime Metro BMD Corp., Arcadis Philippines, Inc., Habitus Design Group, Sy2 and Associates, Inc., Casas and Architects, Inc., and Forsspac (MBR) Corp.

Bloomberry develops destination resorts featuring premium accommodations, gaming and entertainment, and world-class restaurants and other amenities. Its subsidiaries own and operate the Solaire Resort & Casino in the Philippines and Jeju Sun Hotel & Casino in Korea.

Solaire Resort & Casino is a \$1.2-billion integrated destination resort on an 8.3-hectare site in Manila and the first to open in Entertainment City.

It currently operates two distinctive towers, the Bay Tower and the Sky Tower with 800 rooms, suites, and bayside villas and a two-level gaming space spanning 30,200 square meters in Entertainment City that accommodates 200 electronic table games.

On the stock market on Wednesday, Bloomberry shares ended lower by 12 centavos or 2.01% to P5.84 apiece. — **Justine Irish D. Tabile**