

Chinese official denies government hand in cyber attacks

Chinese officials Monday dismissed as 'baseless' reports that their government was involved in cyber warfare targeting Indian computer networks and stressed that such activities were not in sync with the developing trust between the two countries.

'The Chinese government has nothing to do with it. The Chinese government discourages such activities against all countries, including India,' said a Chinese embassy official, who did not wish to be named.

'These reports are baseless. They are not in tune with the growing trust and friendship between India and China,' the official told IANS while alluding to media reports alleging that the Chinese were targeting both government and private Indian computer networks to get access to strategic information.

'Hacking is a worldwide phenomenon. The Chinese networks have also been victims of hacking,' said the official, while recalling how one of the websites of the Chinese government was found to be hacked by someone from North America last year.

Sources in the external affairs ministry admitted that the ministry's computer network had been targeted from time and time and a recent hacking was traced to some Chinese IP addresses.

The ministry is, however, not sure about the antecedents of hackers or whether they have any links with the Chinese government, the source said.

'Some IP addresses were also traced to Americans and Europeans,' he added.

The ministry conducts a periodic audit of the safety of its computer network to prevent hackers from succeeding.

The hackers break into the ministry's communications network to access emails between officials and communication with foreign missions that gives them a sense of sensitive policy making in crucial areas.

The Indian external affairs ministry is not alone in being targeted by hackers. The internal network of the Pentagon, the US defence headquarters, was targeted last year, allegedly by Chinese hackers. The Chinese government had then denied any link with these hackers.

Last year, China was accused of hacking into computer networks of German Chancellor Angela Merkel's chancery and three other ministries. Beijing had strenuously denied these reports.

India has woken up to the looming threat of cyber warfare and is trying to integrate cyber security into its security doctrine.

Top army officers, at a recent commanders' conference chaired by General Deepak Kapoor, decided to boost the 'cyber-security' of its information networks right down to the level of divisions.

The army top brass is also planning 'periodic cyber-security audits' by the Army Cyber Security

Establishment (ACSE) to protect against cyber warfare and data thefts.

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