

# App keeps it under wraps

## Malaysian company develops tool to encrypt SMS to hide it from prying eyes



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**A** MALAYSIA-made security application to prevent possible SMS spying is being rolled out to the global market.

Krypto SMS, developed by mTouche Technology Bhd, uses a 256-bit AES key encryption – the same encryption standard used by the military.

The android app, to be launched on Monday, was developed by the Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC) status company located on the 39th floor of Menara Citibank in Ampang over the last six months.

A team of Malaysian software engineers headed by Kenneth Kong, who had worked for Microsoft Corporation, conducted extensive research and tests to develop the application.

“We know there is the need for such products, especially after the world was shocked by the extensive eavesdropping done by certain government agencies around the world,” said mTouche group chief executive officer Low Keng Fei.

He said providing privacy between two parties, especially over the telephone, was essential for security reasons.

Low said mTouche, which was known for its ringtones offered to older generation mobile phones, decided to embark on the project as there was an urgency to provide a secure solution to safeguard messages delivered over SMS.

He said not many knew the company was also a digital content provider and application and solution provider that had worked closely with major telecommunications companies in South-East Asia countries.

“We have apps for seasonal greetings with photo frames, providing emergency response like Phone SOS and utility apps including phone contacts and utility backup, which we offered to end users through the telcos in the region,” he said.

According to Low, Kong, who is also mTouche’s chief technology officer, and his team had carried out extensive testing on Krypto SMS, especially its security encryption codes, before it was ready for the market.

Krypto SMS app works independently on android smart-

phones.

Users can download and subscribe to the app for a fee. To operate the app, they need to use their own password to launch the programme.

But before the app could be used to send encrypted SMS, the phone owner and recipient have to exchange private keys to lock and unlock the information that would be transmitted between them.

Low said the private encryption and decryption keys will be automatically generated between the two users via SMS and would be stored on the mobile phone instead of a server, which could be hacked. The private keys would enable them to exchange and read each other’s messages.

Low said Krypto SMS generated unique private keys for each user in the app’s contact list.

“There is no general key for everyone. Each user will have its own set of keys to communicate. This is done for security purposes and to safeguard the information sent out to individual users found in the contact book,” Low explained.

He said users can also choose to activate self-destructing SMS.

“A user can set a time limit for the SMS to be stored in the mobile phone. Once the period expires, the SMS will be automatically deleted.”

He said if a user forgets the password to activate the application, they only have 10 attempts. Any further attempts would see everything stored in Krypto SMS automatically deleted.

“Users will have to restore the application and re-communicate with all his contacts to get new encryption keys,” Low added.

Low said they would offer Krypto SMS to one million users in the region who had already subscribed to mTouche’s other mobile applications.

“We are also offering major telcos in Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, Cambodia, Vietnam, Hong Kong and Thailand the chance to provide Krypto SMS to their subscribers.

Aside from this, we are also talking to security and government agencies and ministries in this region to offer them this app.”

He said users could also encrypt their online chats and email when they upgrade to the latest version in June.

It would be followed by video and voice messages next.



1 The Krypto SMS app which would be launch on Monday for global market

2 mTouche group chief technology officer Kenneth Kong (left) and Low Keng Fei, group chief executive officer, examine Krypto SMS which is ready for the global market

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