Hackers keeping pace, warns expert
Correspondents in Bombay
The Australian
AUGUST 17, 2004

COMPUTER hackers are keeping up with the times and are putting an increasingly technology-dependent world at risk, the chairman of leading US-based IT security firm McAfee said. "The telecom infrastructure - whether it be routing in India, UK, Germany or US - is at risk, " George Samenuk told a business conference in Bombay.

"When cellphones go down, it is 10 times as worse because the whole world revolves around cellphones nowadays," he said.

"One major telecom company had 800MB of their source code stolen. A large retail chain could not operate their credit card automation on a Saturday because of a virus attack and lost millions of dollars."

Mr Samenuk said software could now automatically block out 90 per cent of attacks, but other viruses were still getting through.

He recommended complying with normal safety procedures such as keeping long passwords and frequently changing them and not allowing unauthorised people to access organisations' networks.

But he said the increased reliance on technology for sensitive information presented challenges as hackers often posed as banks inquiring for personal details.

"We have had tens of thousands of people who had money stolen from their accounts. So this is another major concern," he said.

"As many, many more people are switching to using mobile phones for emails and tracking stock quotations, we are seeing the propensity of attacks increase."

The global rush for internet-enabled phones, which are estimated to number over 15 million by the end of next year, would be an enormous security challenge, he said.

Agence France-Presse

This report appears on australianIT.com.au.