Taiwan nabs virus engineer
Correspondents in Taipei
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A TAIWANESE computer engineer has been arrested for allegedly designing a virus and putting it on web sites, where hackers from rival China found and used the worm to attack the island's business and government systems. Wang Ping-an, 30, designed the Trojan horse virus called "Peep," which earlier this year allowed the attackers to steal information and retain control of infected computer systems, police said.

"He placed his program on popular hackers' web sites and encouraged people to download it," said Lin Chieh-lung, an official from an internet crime investigation task force.

"He might have wanted only to show off his skills, but he should be aware what harm this could cause," Mr Lin said.

If convicted on charges of vandalising public and corporate property, he could face up to five years in jail, police said.

Police said they began a probe months ago after noticing confidential government data had been stolen by hackers. They then discovered "Peep" was responsible for the theft of data from hundreds of Taiwanese schools, companies and government agencies. The attacks were traced back to China, police said.

China insists that self-ruled Taiwan is part of its territory, and Beijing has threatened to use force to unify the two sides. A civil war split the two countries in 1949.

In recent years, fears have grown that China might enforce its claim of sovereignty over Taiwan by shutting down the island's heavily computerised society with a cyber attack instead of a conventional invasion.

The Associated Press

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