Sophisticated cybercrime unit for EU

BRUSSELS, BELGIUM: In a bid to seize the initiative from increasingly sophisticated online criminals, the European Union unveiled a new cybercrime centre on Wednesday (9 January).

Criminal gangs are using new technology to steal identities, empty bank accounts or profit from child sex abuse and only a centralised system can combat them, EU Home Affairs Commissioner Cecilia Malmstroem said.

A new European Cybercrime Centre (EC3) opened in the Hague alongside Europol last week and "will give a strong boost to the EU's capacity to fight cybercrime and defend an Internet that is free, open and secure," Malmstroem said.

"Cybercriminals are smart and quick in using new technologies for criminal purposes. The EC3 will help us become even smarter and quicker to help prevent and fight their crimes," she added.

The new centre is meant to improve the response to a growing threat that recognises no boundaries, said Troels Oerting, who heads EC3.

"Our lives are led online," Oerting said, stressing that "we can't just put more locks on the door," with the authorities having to focus on the criminals so as to anticipate their next move.

"Criminals don't need a gun to rob a bank. They can get much more money just by using a computer," he said, adding that key to success will be the sharing of resources to produce a coherent international response.

The Commission cites estimates that one million people fall victim each day to cybercrime, resulting in losses of €290bn a year.

In a recent report, the European Network and Information Security Agency warned that the criminals were one step ahead and called for more to be done.

"There is, and always will be, a permanent race in cyberspace between attackers and defenders. Unfortunately, at the moment attackers are one step ahead," it said.

"In this race it is impossible to know and, finally, to beat the opponents without understanding their attack methods," it said.

Source: *AFP* via I-Net Bridge