

Is there a way to tackle the virus menace?

COMPUTER **viruses**, Trojan horses and other IT security breaches have become as common as traffic accidents.

Last month, the Dumador virus struck. Most people did not notice it as it infected only a few hundred machines. But it deserves our attention because Dumador is yet another **sneaky monster** that strikes users who surf an infected website. The infected website will then download computer code secretly to the user's PC.

This code will set up a Trojan horse in the user's system, change the browser security to the lowest level and install a logger that will record every keystroke that he makes. The information collected will then be sent to the hacker. It will even beat the common firewalls and send the user's credit card numbers and personal details. It can also disrupt the anti-virus update features.

Dumador can be stopped if users set their browsers to prohibit the automatic running of code and scripts like ActiveX and Java, which run by themselves when users visit an infected website. But that will also mean users being unable to enjoy the dynamic and interactive content of legitimate websites. So practically, nobody ever turns them off. Said Mr. Jens Andreessen, vice-president of security company Fortinet Asia-Pacific: 'When users know that a website is infected, they will log off immediately. But whether the website is infected, they would not know any better.' There are powerful solutions like the Fortinet integrated security boxes and other intrusion prevention software.

NO GUARANTEE

But these products are costly for non-business users. And there is no guarantee that a new virus will not get past these devices.

Over the past two years, experts have been saying that a vulnerable PC connected to the Internet will get 'touched' within three to four minutes. My personal philosophy is expect the worst and prepare for the worst.

In today's complex IT security environment, the common man can no longer cope with all the changes.

The only safety measure is keeping duplicate copies of your data. And keeping your fingers crossed.