Current State of Cryptographic Research in Malaysia

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ABSTRACT: Development of the national multi-purpose card (smart card) is one of the seven flagships launched under Malaysia's Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC) project. Among the many uses of the smart card are as an identity card, credit card, ATM card, and as e-cash. In view of this, some sort of security mechanism has to be built into the smart card to protect against misuse by unauthorized persons. This is where the study of cryptography comes in. Cryptography involves the study, design and application of methods to ensure the security, privacy and integrity of information. As Malaysian researchers conduct research and development (R&D) on smart cards, it is vital that some emphasis be made on cryptographic research as well. This paper addresses the issue of the current state of cryptographic research in Malaysia, focusing on both public and private universities. The aim is to obtain an overall view of the current state of research in order to promote cooperation and collaboration among Malaysian universities in pursuing cryptographic research as a supplement to the smart card R&D. The paper concludes with suggestions as to how the field of cryptographic research in Malaysia can be enhanced, and outlines future directions in Malaysian cryptographic research.

INTRODUCTION

Development of the national multi-purpose card (smart card) is one of the seven flagships launched under Malaysia's Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC) project. Among the many uses of the smart card are as an identity card, credit card, ATM card, and as e-cash. In view of this, some sort of security mechanism has to be built into the smart card to protect against misuse by unauthorized persons. This is where the study of cryptography comes in. Cryptography involves the study, design and application of methods to ensure the security, privacy and integrity of information. As Malaysian researchers conduct research and development (R&D) on smart cards, it is vital that some emphasis be made on cryptographic research as well.

This paper addresses the issue of the current state of cryptographic research in Malaysia, especially in both public and private universities, and research-based MSC-status companies. The aim is to obtain an overall view of the current state of research in order to promote cooperation and collaboration among Malaysian universities and MSC-status companies in pursuing cryptographic research as a supplement to the smart card R&D. The paper concludes with suggestions as to how the field of cryptographic research in Malaysia can be enhanced, and outlines future directions in Malaysian cryptographic research.

We discuss the state of cryptographic research in public Malaysian universities, namely Universiti Malaya (UM), Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM), Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM), Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM), Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM), Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM), Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS), Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS), as well as in private universities, namely the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM), Multimedia University (MMU), Universiti Tenaga (UNITEN), Universiti Teknologi Petronas (UTP), Universiti Teknologi Mara (UiTM), Universiti Tun Abdul Razak (UNITAR), Monash University Sunway Malaysia (MUSM), Curtin University of Technology, Sarawak Campus Malaysia (CUTSM), University of Nottingham in Malaysia (UNiM), Malaysia University of Science & Technology (MUST) and FTMS-De Montfort University Campus Malaysia.

We group the areas of cryptographic research into 3 major categories, namely designed-based research, analysis-based research and implementation-based research.

DESIGN-BASED CRYPTOGRAPHIC RESEARCH

Design-based research involves research work into the parameters and basic building blocks (primitives) of cryptography for example in conventional and public-key encryption, digital signatures, message authentication and hash functions.

This is an area of cryptographic research that is still fairly in its infancy in Malaysia. From our review of the local Malaysian universities, we found that most of the research in the design of cryptography systems are done by researchers in Mathematics departments. UPM's Maths. Dept. has a team of researchers actively involved in this area. In particular, an active researcher M. R. Said [15] developed a public-key cryptosystem analogous to the LUC cryptosystem. The team also has interests in number theory and Elliptic Curve Cryptosystems (ECC). Meanwhile. USM's Sch. of Math. Sc. has an Error Correcting Code & Public Key Cryptography research group under G. A. How that researches on the design of public key systems [16]. An interesting mention is the results on number theory obtained

by the researchers who used them as a basis for an extended RSA system. The extended system was then applied in digital signatures, group digital signatures and blind digital signatures, hence producing a multiple RSA system. UTM's Comp. Sys. & Comm. Dept. has a Security Control & Analysis System (SCAS) research group led by N. B. Idris that is also very active in designing authentication and key recovery protocols based on the ECC [18]. In fact, cryptographic research at SCAS is done in close cooperation with the government ministries and government agencies, advising the government on the way to move forward in this area. Most of their research projects are funded by the Ministry of Science, Technology and The Environment (MOSTE)'s Intensification of Research in Priority Areas (IRPA) grants. Internationally, SCAS has collaboration with the Royal Holloway & Bedford New College of University of London through joint Ph.D supervisions. SCAS has also won a few awards and their cryptographic products are being used in the Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC) project. Elsewhere, MMU's Eng. Fac. has an Information Systems Security research group headed by M. U. Siddiqi that is involved in designing cryptographic systems. Specifically, researchers have designed a fair e-cash system for internet payment and a fast incremental hash function [23].

Distributed across other Malaysian universities are independent individuals researching in cryptography. M. L. Ahmed from UPM's Comp.& Comm Sys. Eng. Dept. conducts pure research in the design of cryptographic techniques in smart cards [9] whereas L. Barukang of UMS' CS Dept. is studying the property of ECCs for use in realtime authentication protocols. He is also researching on the possibility of using Merseanne primes in cryptography design [6]. Meanwhile, N. A. Abu from MMU's Fac. of Info. Sc. & Tech. (FIST) has personal research interests in prime numbers for use in the design of random number generators and one-time pads [26].

ANALYSIS-BASED CRYPTOGRAPHIC RESEARCH

This area involves the analysis of cryptographic systems in terms of the level of security that they claim to provide, and is a very important area that supplements the design process of cryptographic systems. From the results of our review, analysis-based cryptographic research is a relatively new field of research in Malaysia. Notably, *MMU's Eng. Fac.* had a post-graduate researcher involved in the cryptanalysis of encryption methods, namely on the Advanced Encryption Standard (AES) [23] while L. Barukang of *UMS's CS Dept.* is studying the possibility of applying Merseanne primes in cryptanalysis [6].

IMPLEMENTATION-BASED RESEARCH

Implementation-based cryptographic research is a more popular area of study with Malaysian researchers. The MM & Imaging Sys. research group of *UPM's Comp. & Comm. Sys. Eng. Dept.* has a Computer Unit headed by A. R. Ramli which has research interests in cryptographic implementations especially smart card systems [11]. Similarly, *UTM's E. Eng. Dept.* also has a team of researchers involved in developing smart card applications [17]. At the same time, UTM's SCAS research group in the Comp. Sys. & Comm. Dept. is working closely with the government in the implementation and development of cryptographic engines for the MSC [18]. SCAS develops and implements its own crypto engines and Public Key Infrastructure (PKI) systems. IIUM's Elec. & Comp. Eng. Dept has post-graduate researchers under S. Al-Irhayim implementing the Advanced Encryption Standard (AES) on the Transport Layer Protocol (TLS) and also embedded cryptographic techniques into biometric data to enhance the implementation of authentication schemes [20]. Meanwhile, UNITEN's Elec. Eng. Dept. has a PKI team led by M. Z. Jamaludin currently working on implementing a client-server authentication system using cryptographic techniques [27].

Scattered elsewhere are independent researchers such as L. Barukang of UMS' CS Dept. [6] and N. A. Abu of MMU's FIST [26] who are implementing ECC-based systems. L. Barukang wrote a prototype ECC system to perform key generation, encryption, signing and verification. Meanwhile, besides ECC-based systems, N. A. Abu also implements cryptography applications to provide multimedia security such as encryption and watermarking. C. K. Loo of MMU's Eng. Tech. Fac. is currently working on the implementation of cryptographic techniques in networks and fingerprint biometric encryption systems [25]. Finally, N. B. Z. Ali of UTP's EE Eng. Fac. has research interests in the implementation of encryption algorithms such as Blowfish [28].

ENHANCING CRYPTOGRAPHIC RESEARCH

It is evident from the findings of our review that cryptographic research in Malaysia is concentrated on implementation-based research. The area of design- and analysis-based cryptographic research, especially the latter are still somewhat new to Malaysian researchers. In addition, cryptographic research is conducted mostly by individuals, either independent post-doctoral researchers or post-graduate students under the supervision of their supervisors. There is an absence of a coordinated approach towards cryptographic research since we find that in most cases, only a few isolated researchers are conducting research in cryptography. Also, as far as we know, only five universities (UPM, USM, UTM, MMU and UNITEN) have research groups with interests in cryptography.

In research, it is vital that there be peers who have similar research interests to provide an environment and opportunity for discussion and feedback of ideas. Hence, for cryptographic research in Malaysia to advance further and be at a competitive edge with international researchers, there should be more cooperation between cryptographic researchers from the various Malaysian universities.

Design, analysis and implementation are all equally important areas of cryptography. Knowledge in design is needed for an accurate security analysis and a secure implementation. Many a times the design is sound but errors in the implementation cause weaknesses in a cryptographic system. Experience in analysis and implementation is vital to ensure that the design is secure and efficient. A trusted cryptographic design is one that has withstood years of analysis. And the general public tend to have more faith in a design by a mature researcher with years of experience in security analysis than in a design by a researcher with no such experience.

Therefore, if cryptographic research in Malaysia is to progress at a steady pace, emphasis should be put equally on all three categories of cryptographic research. As such, design- and analysis-based cryptographic research is still very much in need of researchers. This effort would be accelerated somewhat by increased coordination among Malaysian cryptographic researchers. One possible way would be the setting up of a Malaysian cryptography society to provide an environment for researchers to share ideas and promote discussion.

CONCLUSION

We have presented the current state of cryptographic research in Malaysian universities, grouping areas of research into 3 main categories. We have also highlighted ways to enhance cryptographic research in Malaysia. The results of our review are by no means exhaustive. The main intent is to stimulate awareness into the need for more coordination and cooperation in Malaysian cryptographic research. As a reference for cryptographic researchers, we give in the Appendix the list of all the relevant faculties, schools and departments in Malaysian local universities that have or may have research interests in the area of cryptography, and the emails of the persons to contact. It is hoped that through this effort, our aim of encouraging more cooperation between Malaysian cryptographic researchers would be achieved.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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REFERENCES

1. Mazliza Othman, Head, Dept. of Computer Systems & Technology, Faculty of Computer Science & IT, Universiti Malaya (2001)

2. Ow Siew Hock, *Head*, *Dept. of Software Engineering*, *Faculty of Computer Science & IT*, *Universiti Malaya* (2001)

3. Wong Peng Choon, *Professor*, *Institute of Mathematical* Sciences, Faculty of Science, **Universiti Malaya** (2001)

4. Sapiee Hj. Jamel, Coordinator for Computer Science Programme, Faculty of Information Technology, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (2001)

5. Sazali Yaacob, Dean, Dept. of Computer Science, School of Engineering & Information Technology, Universiti Malaysia Sabah (2001) 6. Liawas Barukang, Researcher, Dept. of Computer Science, School of Engineering & Information Technology, Universiti Malaysia Sabah (2001)

7. Aziz Deraman, Dean, Faculty of Information Technology & Science, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (2001)

8. Abdul Razak Salleh, *Head*, *Centre of Science & Mathematical Research, Faculty of Science & Technology, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia* (2001)

9. Mohammed Lawan Ahmed, *PhD Student*, *Dept. of Computer & Communication System Engineering, Faculty of Engineering, Universiti Putra Malaysia* (2001)

10. Norman Mariun, Head, Dept. of Electrical & Electronics Engineering, Faculty of Engineering, Universiti Putra Malaysia (2002)

11. Computer Unit Homepage, Faculty of Computer & Communication System Engineering, Universiti Putra Malaysia (2001) available online at http://www.eng.upm.edu.my/webkkk/multimedia/index.html

12. Abdul Azim Abdul Ghani, Dean, Faculty of Computer Science & IT, Universiti Putra Malaysia (2001)

13. Ali Mamat, Head, Dept. of Computer Science, Faculty of Computer Science & IT, Universiti Putra Malaysia (2001)

14. Mohd. Hasan Selamat, Head, Dept. of Info. Systems, Faculty of Computer Science & IT, Universiti Putra Malaysia (2001)

15. Rushdan Said, Post-doctoral Researcher, Dept. of Mathematics, Faculty of Science & Environmental Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia (2001)

16. Yahya Abu Hassan, Post-doctoral Researcher, Error Correcting Code & Public Key Cryptography Research Group, School of Mathematical Sciences, Universiti Sains Malaysia (2001)

17. Faculty of Electrical Engineering Homepage, *Universiti Teknologi Malaysia* (2001) available online at http://www.fke.utm.my/research/elektronik/research1.htm

18. Norbik Idris, Head, Center for Advanced Software Engineering, Dept. of Computer Systems & Communications, Faculty of Computer Science & Information Systems, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (2001)

19. Siti Mariyam Shamsuddin, Head, Dept. of Computer Graphics & Multimedia, Faculty of Computer Science & Information Systems, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (2001)

20. Sufyan Al-Iryahim, Post-doctoral Researcher, Dept. of Electrical & Computer Engineering, Faculty of Engineering, International Islamic University Malaysia (2001) 21. Ahmed Ashour, Head, Dept. of Science Engineering, Faculty of Engineering, International Islamic University Malaysia (2002)

22. Mohamed Ridza Wahiddin, Head, Dept. of Computational & Theoretical Science, Faculty of Science, International Islamic University Malaysia (2002)

23. Ching Yen Choon, *Researcher*, *Faculty of Engineering*, *Cyberjaya campus*, *Multimedia Universitiy* (2001)

24. Ho Chin Kuan, *Tutor*, *Faculty of Information Technology, Cyberjaya campus, Multimedia Universitiy* (2001)

25. Loo Chu Kiong, Researcher, Faculty of Engineering & Technology, Melaka campus, Multimedia Universitiy (2001)

26. Nur Azman Abu, Researcher, Faculty of Information Science & Technology, Melaka campus, Multimedia Universitiy (2001)

27. Md Zaini Jamaludin, Researcher, Dept. of Electrical Engineering, College of Engineering, Universiti Tenaga (2001) 28. Noohul Basheer Zain Ali, Researcher, Dept. of Electrical & Electronics Engineering, Universiti Teknologi Petronas (2001)

29. Azni Zain Ahmad, Asst. Vice Chancellor (Research), Bureau of Research & Consultancy, Universiti Teknologi Mara (2001)

30. Chen Ying Tian, Director & Senior Research Fellow, Malaysia University of Science & Technology (2002)

APPENDIX: RELEVANT FACULTIES & CONTACTS

In this appendix, we list all the relevant faculties, schools and departments in Malaysian local universities that have or may have research interests in the area of cryptography. We also give the email contacts of the persons who are conducting such cryptographic research, or those in charge of the respective faculties. The D, A and I refer to Design-, Analysis- and Implementation-based research. A shortened version also available online is at http://raphael.topcities.com/cryptoMsia. The list is by no means exhaustive, and the author invites researchers to email him with the latest information regarding the cryptographic research that they are conducting.

University	Faculty/ School	Dept	Contacts	Email	D	A	I	Research Interests & Extra Details
Universiti	CS & IT	Comp. Sys &	Mazliza	Head	No	No	No	One potential
Malaya (UM)		Tech	Othman	mazliza@fsktm.um.				researcher with
				my				interest to
			Laila Mat					commence research
			Kiah	Potential Researcher				
				mlaila@fsktm.um.my				
		Software Eng	Ow Siew	Head	No	No	No	Not a research
			Hock	show@fsktm.um.my				interest
	Eng	Elec	Nasrudin	Head				Awaiting reply
			Abd Rahim	nasrudin@fk.um.edu.				
				my				
	Science	Mathematical	Wong Peng	Professor				
		Sciences	Choon	wpc@mnt.math.um.e				
				du.my				
			Wan Ainun	Researcher				One researcher
			Mior	ainun@mnt.math.um.				awaiting reply for
			Othman	edu.my				further details
						1	r	
Universiti	Tech & Info		Aziz	Dean				Not very involved
Kebangsaan	Sc.		Deraman	dftsm@pkrisc.cc.ukm				in this area
Malaysia				.my				awaiting possible
(UKM)								replies from
			**					academic staff
	Eng		Hassan	Dean				Awaiting reply
			Basri	engdean@vls1.eng.uk				
				m.my	NT	N		
	Sc & Math.		Abd Razak	Dean	No	No	No	Not a research
	Kesearch		Salleh	kpsm@pkrisc.cc.ukm				interest
	Center		I	.my				

Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM)	Eng	Comp. & Comm. Sys	Abd Rahim Ramli	Head of Computer Unit arr@eng.upm.edu.my	Yes	No	Yes	There is an MM & Imaging Sys research group which has research interest in the area
			Mohammad Lawan Ahmed @Lawal Ahmed Gumel	PhD Student gs00607@stud.upm.e du.my				Research in smart card security
		EE Eng	Norman Mariun	Head norman@eng.upm.ed u.my	No	No	No	Not a research interest
	Science & Env Studs	Mathematics	Rushdan Said	Post-doctoral Researcher mrushdan@fsas.upm. edu.my	Act ive	No	No	Has a team of researchers
			Kamel Arifin Mohd Atan	Head of Dept				
			Faridah Bt Yunos	Researcher				
	CS & IT	CS	Ali Mamat	Head ali@fsktm.upm.edu. my				Not a research interest
		IS	Hj Md Hasan Selamat	Head hasan@fsktm.upm.ed u.my				Not a research interest
		MM	Hjh Fatimah Ahmad Ramlan Mahmod	Head fatimah@fsktm.upm. edu.my Post-doctoral researcher ramlan@fsktm.upm.e du.my				Research interest in Number theory awaiting reply for further details
		Tech, Comm & Netw	Mohamed Othman	Head mothman@fsktm.up m.edu.my				Not a research interest
Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM)	Math. Sciences		How Guan Eng Yahya Abu Hasan	Post-doctoral researcher gahow@cs.usm.my Post-doctoral researcher ahyahya@cs.usm.my	Yes	No	No	There is an Error Correcting Code & Public Key Crypto research group, among the research includes Multiple RSA and Blind Digital Signature
	CS		Zaharin Yusoff	Dean zarin@cs.usm.my				Awaiting reply
	EE Eng		Ali Yeon Mohd. Shakaff	Professor aliyeon@eng.usm.my				Awaiting reply
Universiti Teknologi	CS & IS	Comp. Graphics & MM	Siti Mariyam		No	No	No	Not a research interest

Malaysia (UTM)		SE	Safaai Deris	Head safaai@fsksm.utm.m y				Not listed as research interest awaiting confirmation
		Industrial Modelling & Computerization		<i>Homepage</i> http://www.ppi.fsksm .utm.my/				Homepage inaccessible
		Comp. Sys & Comms.						Has 2 related research groups:
			Md Aizaini Maarof	Head maaforma@fsksm.ut m.my				InSec Interests in cryptography and steganography
			Norbik Idris	Head norbik@case.utm.my	Act ive	No	Act ive	SCAS Development of crypto engine and new authentication & key recovery protocols based on ECC
		IS		Homepage http://www.is.fsksm. utm.my/				Homepage inaccessible
	Elec Eng	Electronics	Abu Khari A'ain	Head abu@fke.utm.my				
			Harun Ismail	Post-doctoral researcher harun@suria.fke.utm. my			Yes	A team of researchers involved in smart card application development awaiting reply for further details
		MicroE & Comp	Md Khalil	khalil@suria.fke.utm. my				Awaiting reply
	Science	Mathematics		Homepage http://www.matemati k.fs.utm.my/				Homepage inaccessible
Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM)	IT		Abu Talib Othman	Dean abutalib@uum.edu.m y				Email inaccessible
Universiti Malaysia Sarawak	Eng		Mohammad Kadim Suaidi	Dean kadim@mailhost.uni mas.my				Awaiting reply
(UNIMAS)	IT		Sapiee	Coordinator for CS Programme shapice@fit.unimas. my	No	No	No	Not a research interest

International Islamic Universitiy (IIUM)EngElectrical & CompKhalid Abd Hamid <i>Head</i> khalid@iiu.edu.myNoNoNoSupervisio post-gradu students or implement AES on TI the use of cryptograp biometric of enhance authenticatIIUM)EngElectrical & CompKhalid Abd Hamid <i>Head</i> khalid@iiu.edu.myNoNoNoYesSupervisio post-gradu students or implement AES on TI the use of cryptograp biometric of enhance authenticatScienceComputational & Theoretical ScienceAhmed Shaaban Ashour <i>Head</i> ashour@iiu.edu.myNoNoNoNoNoScienceComputational & Theoretical ScienceMohammed Ridza <i>Head</i> mridza@iiu.edu.myNoNoNoNoNot a resear interestMultimedia UniversityEngChing Yen Choon <i>Researcher</i> vcching@mmu.edu.YesYesNoHas an IS S research er	a of
Science EngAhmed Shaaban AshourHead ashour@iiu.edu.myNoNoNoNoNoNoNoNoa resea interestScienceComputational & Theoretical ScienceMohammed Ridza WahiddinHead mridza@iiu.edu.myNoNoNoNoNoNoa resea interestMultimedia UniversityEngChing Yen ChoonResearcher vcching@mmu.edu.YesYesNoHas an IS Science	ate ate the ation of .S, and hic- lata to
ScienceComputational & Theoretical ScienceMohammed Ridza WahiddinHead mridza@iiu.edu.myNoNoNoNoNoNoa resea interestMultimedia UniversityEngChing Yen ChoonResearcher vcching@mmu.edu.YesYesNoHas an IS Science	ırch
Multimedia Eng Ching Yen Researcher Yes Yes No Has an IS University Choon vcching@mmu.edu. Image: Ching Yen research gr	ırch
University Ching Ten Kesearcher Tes Tes No Has an IS S Choon vcching@mmu.edu.	Socurity
(MMU) (MMU) my with resear involved in design of E and hash fu as well as i cryptanaly. block cipho	oup chers the cash inctions, n sis of ers
IT Ho Chin Researcher No No No Not a researcher Kuan ckho@mmu.edu.my Vo Vo Vo interest	ırch
Eng & TechAndy LowResearcher andy.low@mmu.edu. myNoNoYesResearch in in network and finger biometric encryption	nterests security print systems
Info Science & TechNor Azman AbuResearcher azman@mmu.edu.myYesNoYesResearch in in prime m and one-tin as well as to implement ECC	iterests imbers ne pads, he ation of
Universiti Eng Electrical Md Zaini Researcher No No Yes Implement	ation of
Tenaga (UNITEN) International a PKI system	em
Eng Sciences & MathsRose AiniHead rose@uniten.edu.myAwaiting r	
CS & IT Zainuddin Head Hassan zainuddin@uniten.ed u.mv	eply

Universiti Teknologi Petronas (UTP)	EE Eng		Noohul Basher	Researcher Noohulbasheer_zaina li@petronas.com.my			Yes	Research interest in the implementation of encryption algorithms
	IT/IS							No email given on homepage
Universiti Teknologi Mara (UiTM)	Bureau of Research & Consultancy		Azni Zain Ahmad	Asst. Vice Chancellor (Research) azniz132@salam.iitm .edu.my				Contact Ms Rosmawati Nordin
	IT & Quantitative Sc.		Rosmawati Nordin	roswati@tmsk.itm.ed u.my	No	No	No	Not a research interest
Universiti Tun Abdul Razak (UNITAR)	IT		Khairuddin Hashim	Professor khairuddin@unitar.ed u.my				Awaiting reply
Monash University Sunway	Eng & Sc	Eng	Robin James Alfredson	Head Robin.Alfredson@en gsci.monash.edu.my				Awaiting reply
Malaysia (MUSM)	Bus & IT		Ron Davison	Head Ron.Davison@busit. monash.edu.my				Awaiting reply
Curtin University of Technology				<i>Homepage</i> www.curtin.edu.my				No information or contact email in homepage
University of Nottingham in Malaysia	Eng		Brian Tuck	Director brian.tuck@unim.edu .my				Awaiting reply
(UNiM)	CS & IT		Peter Blanchfield	Director peter.blanchfield@un im.nottingham.ac.uk				Awaiting reply
Malaysia University of Science & Technology (MUST)			Chen Ying Tian	Homepage www.must.edu.my Director & Senior Research Fellow ytchen@must.edu.my	No	No	No	Not a research interest
FTMS-De Montfort University Campus, Malaysia				Homepage www.ftmsglobal.com /ip.htm				No information or contact email in homepage