

Details of Shangri-La hotel club members exposed in data leak

4,300 members, including 'a small number' from S'pore, advised to change passwords

Irene Tham
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Hotel chain Shangri-La International Hotel Management has told

more than 4,300 of its rewards club members to change their passwords following a data breach.

The hotel chain's spokesman told The Straits Times that "a small number" of these are Singapore cus-

tomers, but declined to provide details.

The breach comes after online grocer Redmart last month informed 3,000 customers that their personal data had been leaked online.

The recent breaches have put the spotlight on the need for two-factor or biometric authentication to better secure account access.

In an e-mail to affected members

on Monday, Shangri-La said illegal access to its mobile app – detected between Aug 12 and 13 – gave hackers access to Golden Circle members' names, membership numbers, log-in e-mail address, membership level, number of points and upgrade conditions.

"Upon discovery of this, we immediately mobilised our team and were able to successfully contain the situation within 24 hours," wrote Mr Ng Wee Kee, its vice-president of loyalty and partner marketing.

Mr Ng stressed that no payment card details were leaked, and there were "no confirmed instances of members falling victim to fraud".

Affected members' accounts had been frozen as a precaution, with the hotel urging them to change their passwords. External experts are now reviewing the incident to determine, among other things, the need for additional safeguards.

Initial findings show that the hacker had obtained a list of previously leaked credentials from unknown sources, the hotel chain's spokesman said.

Using these credentials, the hacker was able to access the account details of 4,300 of Shangri-La's seven million global members.

Mr Nilesh Jain, cyber security software maker Trend Micro's vice-president for South-east Asia and India, said the credentials were probably obtained from the underground market or file-sharing sites.

"Leaked e-mail addresses are particularly powerful, as these are linked to several other accounts" he said, adding that apps should be default protect users' access via two-factor or biometric authentication.

For instance, the Amazon Prime Now app scans users' fingerprints to authenticate them.

The latest Norton Cyber Security Insights Report also shows how unsafe password habits can leave users vulnerable. One in five Singaporeans uses the same password for all online accounts, and one in two shares passwords with others. The survey polled more than 1,000 Internet users in Singapore last October.

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Vlogger travelling the world makes clip on S'pore

Seow Bei Yi

A Palestinian-Israeli Harvard graduate has been travelling the world for the past 865 days, documenting experiences in different countries and uploading a one-minute video to his Facebook channel every day.

The social media star has about 7.6 million followers on Facebook and often gets over a million views for his videos.

Mr Nuseir Yassin, 26, the man behind the popular channel Nas Daily, has pledged to rack up 1,000 days on the road – telling the stories of people from Malta to Turkey and now, Singapore.

Yesterday, he hosted his largest spontaneous meet-up with his online followers, attracting at least 700 people outside the Singapore Indoor Stadium on a day's notice.

"I think a lot of people confuse what we do with fame or wanting fame... which is not necessarily true," he said. Rather, what keeps him going is the friendships he has made along the way.

Mr Yassin goes by the apt moniker "Nas", which means "people" in Arabic, and stresses that he is not making videos for the money. "If I can change an opinion, that's all I want," he told The Straits



Mr Nuseir Yassin taking a selfie with his online followers outside the Singapore Indoor Stadium yesterday. He makes one-minute Facebook videos about his travels that garner millions of views. The Israeli-Palestinian, who has been travelling the world for 865 days, says he avoids making video clips about politics or "touristy" aspects of countries. ST PHOTO: DESMOND WEE

Times. For example, some people may be afraid of visiting Turkey because they consider it dangerous. He said: "If I can change one person's opinion about Turkey being dangerous, I'm happy."

Among his most-watched productions is one on the shrinking of the Dead Sea, which has been watched close to 70 million times.

Realising a few years ago that he had lived close to a third of his life

with many more things he still wanted to do, Mr Yassin saved US\$60,000 (S\$82,000) before quitting his US\$120,000 a year software engineering job in the United States, where he worked for mobile payment service Venmo. He generates revenue of US\$80,000 a month now – half from Facebook advertisements available on four long videos each month and the rest from brand deals that he ac-

cepts. He hopes to start a media company after his odyssey ends.

Singapore has struck a chord with Mr Yassin, who avoids making videos about politics or the "touristy" aspects of countries. Topics he found interesting as he did research for the Singapore video included Kampong Lorong Buangkok, the high certificate of entitlement prices for cars, the World Toilet Organisation which was

founded here, and ministerial salaries. The Singapore one-minute video will be aired online today.

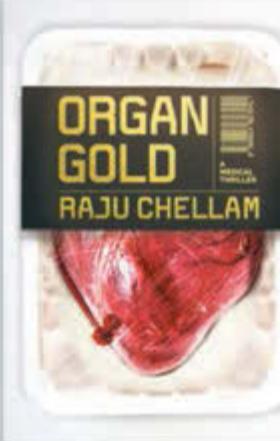
Mr Yassin's gathering yesterday attracted fans and curious on-lookers, including Singapore Institute of Technology undergraduate Avneet Singh, 23, who started following Nas Daily last year.

"Nas shares about different traditions around the world and it's pretty engaging. It's like Discovery

Channel in a minute," he said. Mr Hendric Tay, 30, who also left his job several years ago and co-founded a media platform, The Travel Intern, said: "Nas likes to tell human-centric stories. Sometimes, he simplifies things, but it helps people who are not exposed to different ideas and cultures to get a taste of what things are like elsewhere."

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Community eye clinics save patients a trip to hospital

Linette Lai

Technician Chinnavay Ponnusamy has been getting his eyes checked at a polyclinic close to home since early this month, saving him the trouble of going to a hospital.

The move is part of a nationwide effort to step up eye care in the community and save patients a trip to specialist outpatient clinics in hospitals.

Six primary-care facilities – including Hougang Polyclinic, where Mr Chinnavay has been seeking care – have been chosen for the initiative.

"It's more convenient for me, because it's near my place," said the 59-year-old, who has moderate diabetic retinopathy.

The condition, which causes blurred vision and can result in blindness if not managed properly, is caused by diabetes.

"The service is good and the waiting time is not as long," said Mr Chinnavay, who lives in Serangoon North, adding that he used to visit

Tan Tock Seng Hospital.

Associate Professor Wong Hon Tym told a media briefing on Tuesday that the goal is to refer at least 10 per cent of eye cases across all six participating facilities to the new clinics instead of hospitals.

Hougang Polyclinic alone made 2,700 hospital referrals for eye conditions last year.

Patients referred to the new eye clinics would typically have conditions that require specialised equipment or more care.

"For example, people with moderate cataracts that would cause mild blurred vision," said Prof Wong, who is medical director of the National Healthcare Group Eye Institute. "These people are starting to have some problems, but are still coping very well."

Complex or urgent cases will still be referred to hospital specialists.

Hougang Polyclinic's eye clinic is being run by optometrists qualified to diagnose and manage such diseases and supervised by resident physicians for the first three years.



Optometrist Quek Zuoling giving Mr Chinnavay Ponnusamy a check-up at the eye clinic at Hougang Polyclinic, one of six primary-care facilities chosen for an initiative to step up eye care in the community. ST PHOTO: LEE JIA WEN

It conducts five half-day sessions a week and will eventually scale this up to 10 sessions a week.

Another facility is being run at Keat Hong Family Medicine Clinic as part of a partnership with the National University Hospital (NUH).

"Community eye clinics are lo-

cated in the heartland and will focus on diagnosing, treating and monitoring patients with stable and non-complex eye problems," said Associate Professor Clement Tan, who heads the eye surgery centre at NUH.

"We hope that the clinics will bolster the provision of primary care

to the community and bring about savings in time and healthcare costs for patients."

The other four facilities chosen are Pioneer, Geylang and Punggol polyclinics and the Health Promotion Board.

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