

Watchdog probes electricity retailer over data breach

Geneco exposed 350 potential customers' e-mail addresses

Hariz Baharudin

The privacy watchdog is investigating electricity retailer Geneco, after the company exposed the personal e-mail addresses of more than 350 of its potential customers – the second breach of private data discovered in a week.

Last Saturday, the company e-mailed some of its potential customers to ask for a copy of their Singapore Power (SP) bill to verify their account with Geneco.

The e-mail, which was seen by The Straits Times (ST) on Monday, copied the e-mail addresses in the "To" field so the contacts were visible to all recipients.

The firm should have used the BCC – blind carbon copy – option to conceal the e-mail addresses of other recipients.

In a separate e-mail sent a day later, Geneco's senior manager of customer experience Florence Joseph admitted the mistake and apologised to these customers.

In response to queries from ST, a spokesman for the Personal Data Protection Commission (PDPC) acknowledged on Monday that it had been notified of the incident by Seraya Energy, which is the provider

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for Geneco, and was looking into it.

According to Ms Joseph, the earlier e-mail was mistakenly disseminated to some of Geneco's customers with other recipients' e-mail addresses clearly visible.

She added that the company took full responsibility for the incident and that it regretted that the situation had occurred.

"We apologise for the inconvenience that this matter may have caused you, and for the potential unsolicited e-mails that may occur as a result of this incident. We have identified the issue and taken measures to rectify it," she said.

Those still keen to proceed to activate their accounts were told not to reply to the previous e-mail that

was sent and to e-mail their SP bills directly to Geneco.

Mr Bryan Tan, a lawyer from Pin-sent Masons MPillay specialising in technology law and data protection, said the gaffe could be a breach of the Personal Data Protection Act.

"In the PDPC's guide to preventing accidental disclosure when processing and sending personal data, it states that companies have to implement e-mail procedures to ensure all e-mails sent externally to a group of recipients have the recipients' e-mail addresses placed in the BCC field to avoid disclosing recipients' e-mail addresses to all other recipients of the e-mail," he said.

Geneco is one of the new electricity retailers that have popped up since the electricity market was opened up last November.

On Monday, ST reported that the PDPC is investigating international beauty retailer Sephora, after it reported a breach of its online users' data, affecting customers in Singapore as well as in other countries, including Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, the Philippines, New Zealand and Australia.

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A screengrab from a video circulating on social media showing a knife-wielding man being surrounded by police officers in Woodlands Rise on Monday. The man, who was arrested, is suspected of being involved in a theft case.



Knife-wielding man arrested after causing scare

Lim Min Zhang

A man suspected of being involved in a theft case wielded a knife and disrupted a group of kindergarten children's rehearsal for a performance for their pre-school's National Day celebrations.

He was arrested after being confronted by eight police officers.

The incident took place at about 11am on Monday at Block 785E Woodlands Rise.

About 30 kindergarten children were in a sheltered area rehearsing their performance when the man with the knife appeared, reported

Chinese-language newspaper Shin Min Daily News yesterday.

The knife was about 20cm long and the atmosphere was tense, an eyewitness told the newspaper.

Another said six teachers were with the children, some of whom suffered bruises in trying to flee. The eyewitness added that the man did

not harm the children.

A 2½-minute video posted on Facebook by user Muhammad Raihan on Monday showed a man being confronted by eight officers holding batons in a sheltered area.

He wrote in his post that a white screen, speaker and two microphones were in the sheltered area,

and that the children were rehearsing for a National Day performance when the incident took place.

The man initially did not obey when officers told him to put down the knife. But he eventually did so, lay on the ground and was arrested.

The police confirmed yesterday that a 55-year-old man, suspected of being involved in a theft case, was arrested during a police operation on Monday.

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Man wins appeal against hanging, gets life term instead

Selina Lum
Law Correspondent

A brothel operator, originally sentenced to death for murdering a pimp who worked for him, avoided the hangman's noose yesterday after the Court of Appeal allowed his appeal and sentenced him to life imprisonment instead.

The three-judge court said the totality of the circumstances showed that Chan Lie Sian, 55, did not have a specific intention to kill 35-year-

old William Tiah Hung Wai.

Chan was convicted in the High Court in 2017 of committing murder with the intention of causing death, which carries the mandatory death penalty.

The apex court yesterday downgraded the charge to murder with the intention of causing bodily injury, which could cause death.

It sentenced Chan to life imprisonment, and not death, as the manner in which he acted did not show a blatant disregard for human life.

On Jan 14, 2014, Chan, who is also

known as Benny Seow, discovered that \$6,500 of his money was missing and suspected that Mr Tiah was responsible.

He summoned Mr Tiah to the brothel, a lodging house in Lorong 18 Geylang, intending to force a confession out of him.

Chan repeatedly struck Mr Tiah on the head with a metal dumbbell rod even as the pimp fervently denied stealing the money, until he lost consciousness.

Mr Tiah died a week later in hospital, a day short of his 36th birthday.

A post-mortem found that there were 10 points of impact to the victim's head.

Chan surrendered himself to the police two days after the assault.

He was found guilty of murder in May 2017 after a High Court judge concluded that he had intended to kill the victim. Chan appealed against his conviction and sentence.

His lawyer Wendell Wong presented reports from a forensic pathologist from Australia which said two of the impacts could have been caused by the victim hitting his head on "intervening objects", and not attributable to blows by Chan.

Yesterday, the Court of Appeal, comprising Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon and judges of appeal Andrew Phang and Judith Prakash, concluded that Chan did not have a specific intention to kill the victim.

The court noted that with no witnesses around and with the victim

lying helpless on the bed, Chan had every opportunity to bring any such intention to kill to fruition. Yet, he did not do so.

The court also noted that at one point, in the presence of another staff member, Chan splashed water on the victim to revive him, accused the victim of feigning death and said that he would attack him again when he regained consciousness.

These actions made no sense if Chan had attacked the victim intending to kill him, said the court.

Turning to the sentence, the court said the death sentence was not warranted as Chan had not acted in a manner that displayed blatant disregard for human life.

It found that Chan was not aware at the time of the attack, or in its immediate aftermath, of the fatal nature of the victim's injuries.

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TTSH nurses lauded for mittens that help patients

Lee Qing Ping

Tan Tock Seng Hospital (TTSH) patients with dementia and delirium are given a hand in staying safe – wearing special pairs of mittens designed by nurses there.

Some mental conditions can often cause patients to become agitated or restless and pull out their tubes and catheters.

In May last year, nurses from Ward 5A came up with their Idea Hand Mittens, which are cushioned, zip-fastened hand gear that offers easy access to patients' fingers.

Dr Amy Khor, Senior Minister of State for Health, yesterday paid tribute to their idea, saying it was one

of several "kampung innovations" which TTSH nurses have invented.

"Healthcare innovation brings new and more effective ways of solving problems. But it does not necessarily entail complex projects involving advanced technology such as augmented reality," said Dr Khor. "Often, all it takes is having a fresh look at how things can be done differently."

Dr Khor was speaking at TTSH's Nurses' Day celebrations, where she was the guest of honour. The celebrations took place at the Ng Teng Fong Centre for Healthcare Innovation, opposite TTSH in Novena.

An earlier version of the mittens, which used a Velcro fastener, was not successful as patients could still



The new mitten has a zip to allow nurses to access a patient's fingers to take blood tests or check his vital signs. PHOTO: TAN TOCK SENG HOSPITAL

pull them off.

Nurse clinician Zhou Aijin, who led the Idea Hand Mittens project, told The Straits Times: "Last year, there were six cases of patients who

pulled out their tubings despite the mittens. That's very dangerous and painful for them. It also costs time and money to reinsert the tubes."

There have been no further inci-

dents since the new mittens were introduced, and feedback from patients' caregivers has been positive.

Such has been their impact that the mittens have even been displayed during the Singapore Design Week as an example of point-of-care innovation.

Ms Tan Tzuu Ling, senior nurse manager at TTSH, said the hospital's governance councils (GCs) "provide oversight for nursing ground-up innovative ideas".

She added: "The GCs accept idea submissions from nurses, and run regular clinic sessions for them to present their ideas to get support or seed funding. They then follow up on the progress of the idea and plan for spread if applicable."

The nurses are still piloting and finding ways to improve the mittens. Ms Zhou said: "I hope they will be rolled out to the rest of the hospital, and eventually, to the rest of the National Healthcare Group."

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Former club employee jailed for embezzling \$278,000

Charmaine Ng

After getting into trouble with the police, a former account and administrative assistant with Hougang United Football Club embezzled nearly \$300,000 in cash from the club's safes.

She transferred the money to a man who had promised to help her resolve the police case.

Yesterday, Malaysian Tean Tai Tee, 25, was jailed for two years for criminal breach of trust.

Tean's work duties included keeping an account of the money inside two safes at Hougang Stadium – one in the office and the other in the clubhouse. She also issued cash floats for the jackpot machines. She had access to the keys for both safes, which contained the club's sales revenue and earnings.

On Oct 6 last year, Tean received a "friend" request over Facebook from a Lily Tan and accepted the request.

Subsequently, the person asked Tean if she was interested in a part-time job which involved the use of Tean's bank account for transactions on the person's behalf. She would earn a 5 per cent commission from each transaction.

Tean agreed and gave her bank account details to both Lily Tan and the latter's colleague, known only as Steven in court documents.

Nearly a week later, she began receiving money in her bank accounts, and each time, she would transfer it to Steven as soon as possible.

The following month, her bank accounts were frozen, and when she contacted the police, they told her that the transactions involving Lily Tan and Steven were being investigated.

When she informed Steven about it, he told her to give a false account to the police that she had taken loans from an unlicensed moneylender, and had allowed the moneylender to use her bank accounts to make transactions in lieu of loan repayments.

Tean did so, and on Nov 26, was arrested.

While out on bail, she contacted Steven, who told her he could help her resolve the matter for a fee of \$100,000. This was eventually lowered to \$30,000.

Three days later, Tean took various amounts of money from the office safe when the accountant, Ms Yap Mei Jan, was not around. She continued taking money in increasing amounts until Deputy Public Prosecutor Tan Yanying.

That month, Tean also began taking money from the safe at the clubhouse.

Over almost a month, she took \$145,200 from the office safe and \$133,000 from the clubhouse safe. Each time, the cash was deposited into bank accounts provided by Steven.

Tean's offences were discovered by Ms Yap on Dec 15 last year after she noticed a shortfall of about \$278,000 in the safes.

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