

## Press Release

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LCSD apologises to guardians of participants in slogan competition

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The Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) has written to the guardians of participants in the 2009 East Asian Games Slogan Competition apologising for a situation in which some particulars of individual guardians were at one time accessible through searches on the Internet.

The department ran the 2009 East Asian Games Slogan Competition from October 19 to November 30, 2005. To make it convenient for participants to submit their slogans, the department engaged a computer service contractor to design and provide a computer program for submission of entries through the Internet. To allow participants to change their contact information, the department on November 15 added onto the relevant website a program for editing of personal data. By keying in their Identity Card numbers and entry reference numbers, participants could log in to their respective personal data pages and make changes.

For the purpose of verifying participants' eligibility and contacting them, participants in the competition were required to provide personal particulars including name, date of birth, Identity Card number, contact telephone number, correspondence address and email address. Since the creation of the slogans involved copyrights, participants under the age of 18 were required to provide the particulars of their guardians in addition to their own.

The department was first informed on May 6 this year that if the guardians' particulars (or part of the particulars) submitted by some of the participants were entered by someone surfing the Internet for searching through Google's search engine, the search results might include the guardians' name, date of birth and Identity Card number, while other data submitted in connection with the competition would not be displayed.

Upon receiving this information, the department immediately asked Google to remove all the relevant data from its search engine. The removal was completed on May 8. Afterwards the department ascertained that the concerned data could no longer be searched for and viewed through Google's search engine. The department also tried searching for the data through other widely used search engines and found nothing.

"The department has contacted Google and asked it to check its records to ascertain whether the concerned data had been viewed, and, if so, how many times. We have received no response so far," a department spokesman said.

"As we have yet to receive a response, we decided to inform those who have possibly been affected."

"We apologise sincerely for the incident," the spokesman

said.

"According to information we now have, out of the 3,424 guardians concerned, two guardians' Chinese name, date of birth and Identity Card number have been viewed through Google, as were two other guardians' Chinese and English name and date of birth. We have no information that the other 3,000 or so guardians' data submitted in connection with the competition have been viewed through this channel. However, as a prudent measure, we also informed them about the incident at the same time.

"We have also studied the incident with the Police. In the Police's opinion, the possibility of the data involved in this incident to be used for illegal purposes is not high. Nevertheless, we suggest that those who may have been affected should seek help from the Police if they suspect that their personal data have been used for illegal purposes," he said.

After learning about the incident, the department thoroughly examined all its computer systems that handled personal data and ascertained that there were no similar data security problems.

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