

Line app urges password changes as Japan probes hacking (Update)

June 19 2014



Smartphone messenger application Line, which has hundreds of millions of users across Asia, is urging people to change their passwords as Japanese police investigate the hacking of hundreds of accounts

Smartphone messenger application Line, which has hundreds of millions of users across Asia, was urging people to change their passwords Thursday as Japanese police investigated the hacking of hundreds of accounts.

At least 303 cases of unauthorised access were confirmed between late May and June 14, including three that involved cash trades resulting in financial loss, a Line spokesman told AFP, without providing further details.

"We are cooperating with police in investigating the cases, and we are calling for users to change passwords," the spokesman said.

The accounts were hacked "presumably after shared passwords with other online services were leaked somewhere else," he said, adding that to the company's knowledge, all of the breaches occurred in Japan.

Another spokeswoman for the company stressed that Line's servers had not come under attack.

"Line's system itself has suffered nothing abnormal. It is not that our system was hacked," she said.

A police spokesman said the case was under investigation.

Set up in 2011, Line now has more than 400 million users, mainly in Japan and mainland Asia, and is growing fast.

The service lets users make free calls, send instant messages and post photos or short videos, combining attributes from Facebook, Skype and messaging application WhatsApp.

Line has forged heavyweight partnerships with football clubs FC Barcelona and Real Madrid, brands such as Coca-Cola and tennis star Rafael Nadal.

FC Barcelona, for instance, has a home page on the app which has millions of "friends".

One of Line's main selling points is its "stickers"—funny, cartoon-like figures that users can post to friends.

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Citation: Line app urges password changes as Japan probes hacking (Update) (2014, June 19) retrieved 20 March 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2014-06-line-urges-password-japan-police.html>

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