

2 South Koreans arrested in theft of data from 8 million cellphone customers

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SEOUL, South Korea (AP) -- South Korean police said they arrested two men who allegedly stole the personal details of about 8 million mobile phone subscribers and sold the data to marketing companies in one of the country's biggest hacking schemes.

Police said in a statement Sunday that the two men developed the hacking program that was used to steal the names, residential registration numbers and phone numbers of customers of KT, which is South Korea's largest fixed-line telephone company and No. 2 mobile operator. The program was uploaded to the company's computer systems and harvested personal data for months.

Police said the two made about \$877,000 from the hacking scheme. They sold the program as well as mobile subscriber data to telemarketing companies which used the details to contact customers to solicit them to switch to other mobile operators.

Authorities said a former KT employee and six others were also charged for their roles in the scheme.

The data theft at KT took place over the span of five months from February and affected about half of KT's 16 million mobile customers.

KT apologized and said it will beef up its security system.

The incident is the latest in a series of large-scale hacking attacks that have affected millions in one of the world's most wired countries. Last year, hackers stole personal data of 13 million gamers at Nexon and private details of 35 million members at web portal Nate and Cyworld were leaked.

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