

Netizens Root Out Chinglish Signs

‘GOOD FUNGUS VERY MUCH’: A ministry-organized Facebook group identified 72 bad translations, with participants receiving gifts such as Wiis in return for their help

The Ministry of Transportation and Communications said yesterday it had mobilized more than 2,000 Netizens via Facebook to identify incorrectly translated or misspelled bilingual signs on the highways and freeways as well as in scenic areas around the nation.

The ministry said it had received a total of 140 submissions from September last year to last month, with 72 of them being valid.

The ministry said that 81 cases were related to signs made by its own bureaus, whereas 59 cases involved signs produced by other government agencies. Ministry of Transportation and Communications Deputy Minister Yeh Kuang-shih (葉匡時) said that as the nation aims to become a tourist nation, it has been trying to correct some of the ill-translated signs.

“In the past, the ministry was more passive about this matter. We only started correcting signs either after media reported them or people complained about them,” he said.

Yeh said the event showed that the ministry has taken an active approach to addressing the issue.

“More than 2,000 Netizens spent four months finding only 72 valid cases,” he added. “This showed that problems with bilingual signs in this nation are not as serious as some people might think.”

Meanwhile, the ministry gave out Wiis or other electronic products to the Netizens as gifts for making an effort to identify the problematic translations.

Liu Hou-jun (劉厚君), and his wife topped the list of those identifying the most badly translated signs. Because they could not attend the award ceremony yesterday, Liu’s sister accepted the gifts on their behalf.

“They [the couple] would travel to small towns in Tainan and Kaohsiung over the weekend and pay special attention to the signs,” Liu’s sister said.

Among some of the interesting findings, the lemon aiyu jelly (檸檬愛玉) was translated into “The lemon loves the jade.” The steamed pork bun (肉包), on the other hand, was translated into “fresh meat package.” Uni-President drinks containing lactic acid bacteria were translated as “Good fungus very much.”



“Chinglish” Signs...

A. Discuss

1. What is “Chinglish”? Can you think of any common “chinglish” mistakes that native Chinese-speaking people make?
 2. Have you ever seen any signs with “Chinglish” translation mistakes?
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B. Read the article. Try to guess the meanings of any words that you don’t know.

C. Now match the definitions below with the highlighted words in the article:

(Part 1) root out / fungus / ministry / mobilized / Netizens / via / submissions / valid / bureaus / agencies / ill-

.....	encouraged; motivated people to do something
.....	using; travelling through a place on the way to another place
.....	suggestions; proposals to be considered
.....	look for and find
.....	acceptable; relevant
.....	badly
.....	government departments
.....	government departments
.....	government department
.....	a kind of wild mushroom that is often poisonous
.....	people who use the internet

(Part 2) passive / addressing / making an effort / problematic / topped the list / award ceremony / on their behalf / lactic acid bacteria

.....	trying hard
.....	an event where people receive prizes for special achievements
.....	came first
.....	inactive; not doing very much
.....	a kind of beneficial organism that can help with digestion
.....	for somebody
.....	looking at; trying to find solutions
.....	causing problems; difficult

D. Comprehension Questions & Post Reading Discussion

1. How did the government encourage people to look for incorrect signs?
2. According to the report, is the problem with incorrect signs very serious?
3. Why is Liu Hou-jun’s sister mentioned in the article
4. After reading this article, do you think you will pay more attention to “Chinglish” signs?