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SEREMBAN: Save your breath and slam down the phone on scam callers. This simple advice, said Negri Sembilan commercial crime investigation department (CCID) chief Supt Aibee Abd Ghani, can counter the rising number of Macau scam cases and save potential victims from being cheated of their hard earned money.

Macau scam syndicates are having a field day, having fleeced thousands of victims including professionals such as engineers, doctors and lecturers who have lost millions of ringgit in recent years after being duped into believing they had run foul of the law.

Speaking to *theSun* yesterday, Aibee reminded the public that police investigating a case will never conduct a statement recording session with a witness via telephone.

"No doubt a police investigations officer might telephone a witness, the most he would ask is verification of the person's identity. Any further action will be done in person," he said.

"A witness may be told to show up at a police station for further quizzing, but the officer will never seek personal details such as one's bank account number or the amount of cash he has, nor will he ask for cash to be transferred into another account.

"If the phone conversation progresses to this, it is almost definitely a scam. Simply save your breath and cut the line," he added.

Aibee agreed that Malaysians can be very courteous when they take phone calls and therefore, might find it hard to drop a call.

However, he said in these instances, it is best to just hang up before they cause any fear or panic.

Aibee said the public should be cautious when receiving calls that begin with a voice recording claiming they are wanted by police or

Slam it on scammers

➤ Cut short calls from suspicious callers to stay safe, top cop advises

other enforcement agencies.

He added that the call identification feature might also show a number of a police station or government agency, a ruse that the syndicates pull off with the use of spoofing software that is widely available in the market.

Aibee said those who receive scam calls should not hesitate to call the police or other agencies to verify if there is truth to the claims made by the scammers.

He said scammers usually target retirees and those above 50 as they often have more savings.

On why many are still falling victim to such scammers although it had been widely reported, Aibee believes that ignorance and

failing to keep abreast of current news is to blame.

"We found that such victims were unaware of the existence of such scams although it has been making the news almost every other day for years. Perhaps they are too focused on their careers and have not bothered to take time to learn what is happening in society. It is not difficult to read the news these days. All it takes is a push of a button."

Aibee said it is also very strange that victims do not share their scam encounter with their family or friends.

"There have been cases of the scammers calling them over several days and have them

move their cash into the scammer's bank accounts. Had they confided in others, perhaps they would have been enlightened by someone who is aware of such scams and cut their losses," he said.

Macau scam syndicates operate call centres that randomly make thousands of calls daily to the public, impersonating officials from the police, Customs Department, Immigration Department, courts, Inland Revenue Board and other agencies.

Instilling fear by claiming they are under investigations for money-laundering, drug trafficking and other illegal activity, the scammers dupe victims into moving their cash from their bank accounts into mule accounts, claiming it is "procedure and part of the investigations".

Police said scammers amassed more than half a billion ringgit from their victims last year, with another RM450 million recorded between January and October this year.