

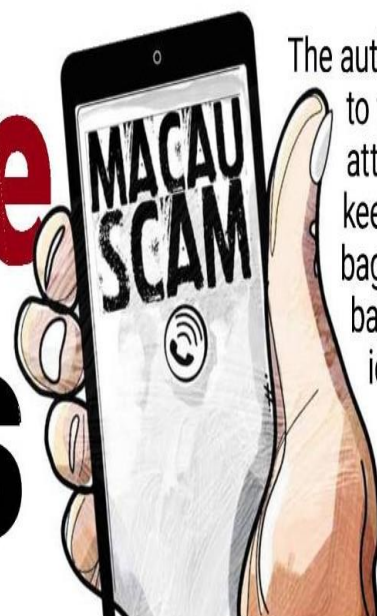


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# Jamming the scammers



The authorities are digging deep to get to the root of the Macau scam as attempts to con the unsuspecting keep rising with RM560mil bagged last year alone. Technical barriers are being deployed to identify and automatically block calls from scammers, says MCMC. > See page 5 for reports by ALIZA SHAH and RAHIMY RAHIM

## Barriers go up on scammers

### MCMC working to identify and block Macau scam calls

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**KUALA LUMPUR:** Macau scam syndicates planning to hoodwink more of the unsuspecting with their telephone calls will find that things will not be so easy anymore.

The Malaysian Communication and Multimedia Corporation (MCMC) is going to the root of the scam to identify and block connections here with the introduction of "technical barriers".

The initiative under the Industry Taskforce for Telecommunication Fraud is being carried out with telecommunication service providers (TSPs) and the Commercial Crime Investigation Department (CCID).

MCMC chief regulatory officer Zulkarnain Mohd Yasin said 1.6 billion of such scam calls, including those made via Voice Over Internet Protocol (VoIP), had already been blocked.

He said the technical barriers, known as the "Seven Blocking Rules", identify and automatically block calls from scammers.

Among the key initiatives are the

setting up of restriction rules for TSPs to stem or reduce the number of suspicious calls from reaching users.

"Suspicious calls, normally from abroad, will be blocked if they meet the criteria of the seven blocking rules," he said in an interview with Star Media Group's Bahasa Malaysia news portal Majoriti.

Zulkarnain declined to shed light on the barriers, saying the MCMC wants to keep how it operates under wraps.

It is learnt that one of the methods is to block calls from Macau scam perpetrators from foreign-based telephone numbers.

The CCID revealed that a total of 1,585 Macau Scam cases were reported last year with losses totalling RM560mil.

The Securities Commission Malaysia has received 67,552 cases of fraud involving losses amounting to RM2.23bil from 2017 to June 20, 2021, which included cases of e-commerce and investment scams.

Zulkarnain said the scammers used VoIP application which allowed them to mask their overseas phone



numbers to make it seem like the calls came from local numbers.

"At times they disguised themselves as police or Bank Negara officials, but the calls actually came from abroad. There are still many who received calls from Macau scammers, meaning there are still many calls that managed to pass through the technical barriers," he said, adding that the "barriers" are being fortified.

Zulkarnain admitted that it is difficult for service providers to completely prevent these calls from reaching the unsuspecting public.

As such, he advised people to be alert and ignore any suspicious calls or SMS asking them for personal details.

If the content is offensive, threatening or inappropriate, he said a police report should be lodged, or a check could be made with the CCID Scam Response Centre at 03-2610

1559 and 03-2610 1599 (8am to 8pm daily).

He said the public should be educated on how to report and block such calls/SMS with the service or application providers.

"This will help minimise further attempts of unwanted calls from such numbers coming through," he added.

The modus operandi of Macau scammers is to make threatening phone calls posing as police officers, tax agents, central bank workers and others, claiming that the person they called is implicated in a criminal offence and being investigated.

Their motive is to scare people into believing that they are in trouble – unless they transfer sums of cash into certain bank accounts.

In some cases, the scammer tells the victim to contact another scammer posing as an officer from the same agency to make the scam seem realistic.

The term "Macau scam" was coined because it is believed that it originated from Macau and that the fraudulent behaviour is common there.