



Headline: Spot, avoid and report scammers
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Spot, avoid and report scammers

Amid rising number of cases, authorities urge public to be more cautious

KUALA LUMPUR: Despite constant reminders and notifications, people are still being duped by Macau Scams.

Last year, 1,585 Macau scam cases were reported nationwide resulting in RM560.8mil in losses.

This year, the number has already reached 1,258 cases between Jan 1 and April 19, involving RM65.4mil in losses.

The Macau Scam modus operandi often starts with a phone call from someone pretending to be an officer from a bank, government or law enforcement agency or debt collector.

The scammer will then claim that the potential victim owes money, has an unpaid fine or has even been implicated in a crime.

The victim will then be given a choice to settle the matter – by transferring his funds to a mule account designated by the “officer” or by facing “dire consequences”.

These unsuspecting victim will then be asked to make payments to get him off the hook.

Hundreds of millions of ringgit have been lost to these scammers, who pose as officers from government agencies such as the police, Bank Negara Malaysia (BNM) and even the Inland Revenue Board (LHDN).

The range of victims have also expanded to include those in the professional line such as doctors and lawyers.

Kuala Lumpur Commercial Crime Investigation Department (CCID) chief Asst Comm Mohd Mahidisham Ishak said several factors may address why Macau scam cases are still occurring.

“We believe it is a combination of a few things.

While we have conducted various campaigns to increase awareness, it could be that the message has not reached society thoroughly.

“We have utilised various platforms, including social media and public transport to spread more awareness on Macau scams.

“We will step up such campaigns to include having talks in schools to ensure that knowledge on such scams reach the masses,” said ACP Mohd Mahidisham.

Changes in the scammers’ modus operandi might have also contributed to such cases still occurring, ACP

Be wary, be aware

The term “Macau scam” was coined as it is believed that the con originated from Macau or that the first victims came from there. But this has never been confirmed.

HOW SCAMMERS WORK

1. THE CALL

Scammers will assume fake identities and introduce themselves as police officers, bank officers, court clerks, an officer with the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC), postal workers or various others.

2. THE TALE

Scammers will spin a fake story to scare victims into believing they are in trouble. Among the tales they’ve cooked up include claiming illicit items being found in packages, bank accounts being used for money laundering, overdue credit card debt and owing the

Inland Revenue Board a large amount in outstanding taxes.
> Scammers are also likely to refer victims to a “higher ranking officer” to make the ruse more believable.

3. THE TRAP

After convincing their victims that they are in trouble, scammers would then get them to download a fake app to get their banking details or get victims to transfer money into given accounts.

4. THE GETAWAY

Perpetrators will then leave with the money and victims will only realise later that they have been duped.

DON'T BE A VICTIM!

1. Don't panic when you receive a call from someone claiming to be from the authorities.

2. Remember, government and law enforcement agencies cannot transfer calls between themselves to investigate fraud. For example, Bank Negara Malaysia cannot transfer the call to the police and vice versa.

3. Police will never call and threaten to arrest anyone so be wary of calls claiming they will.

4. Do not blindly follow the scammer's instructions and disclose personal or banking details.

5. When in doubt, check with the organisation the scammer claims to represent by dialing their official numbers. Do not redial or call back any number that was given during the call.

TheStar graphics

Got your EPF money? Beware the scammers

MELAKA: With Employment Provident Fund (EPF) members allowed to make a special RM10,000 withdrawal, police are taking pre-emptive measures to create awareness about Macau scams.

“Although no reports have been received, we decided to take precautionary measures to warn them.

“The scammers often look for

victims who have money, and we have warned EPF members to be on the lookout for such scams,” said the state commercial crime chief Supt E. Sundra Rajan.

He said the scammers would “frighten” their victims by posing as enforcement officers.

They would use verbal threats, including arrest, to convince the victims to transfer their money into the scammers’ bank accounts.

Mohd Mahidisham added.

“Scammers have posed as officers from the police force, Customs department, BNM and LHDN in the past.

“As mentioned in the past, scammers also used the Voice Over Internet Protocol (VOIP) to mask their phone numbers.

“We hope the public will remain vigilant against such tactics,” he said.

Victims not informing family

members or authorities due to embarrassment could be another factor for such cases, he lamented.

ACP Mohd Mahidisham is also concerned that such scam methods have become more elaborate.

“Usually, the harassment by the scammers will last between one to two hours.

“However, since last month, we have been recording cases where the victims were harassed for about a week. It is important for family

members to act if they spot any changes or peculiar actions (faced by the affected family member),” he said.

ACP Mohd Mahidisham also reminded the public that agencies such as the police do not conduct investigations over the phone.

“Witnesses or those who can assist the investigation will be required to make an appointment so that their statements will be recorded at the police station or headquarters.

“Don't be fooled by such calls ... better yet, if you do not recognise the phone number, do not answer the call,” he stressed.

The public should never divulge any banking details to a third party, he added.

“Banking details should be kept safe. Don't register the phone number of others for your bank account,” he said.

ACP Mohd Mahidisham urged those with enquiries to contact the CCID Scam Response Centre at 03-26101559/1599, Whatsapp the CCID info-line at 013-2111222, or log on to semakmule.rmp.gov.my.

“Utilise the facilities that we have prepared for the public.

“Preventing and busting scams, especially Macau scams, remain our priority,” he said.

Meanwhile, Bukit Aman Commercial Crime Investigation Department (CCID) director Comm Datuk Mohd Kamarudin Md Din recently said Macau scam syndicates were using a new tactic to target Tabung Haji account holders.

“We have recorded 65 cases amounting to RM3.6mil in losses already recorded.

“Based on investigations, these activities are being conducted by Macau scam syndicates.

“They would make calls to the victims and intimidate the victims with allegations of involvement in criminal activities and outstanding credit card debts among other tactics,” he said.

He said the syndicates would then ask for the victims to disclose their banking information to clear them of any wrongdoing.

“We have now detected cases where the syndicates have withdrawn money from Tabung Haji accounts linked to conventional bank accounts belonging to the victims.

“The convenience of Internet banking facilities by Tabung Haji and other conventional banks has made this possible,” he said, adding that investigations revealed the victims had provided banking information to unknown individuals over the phones.

He said as a result, the victims not only lost money from their bank accounts but also money from their pilgrimage fund accounts.