



**PERSATUAN BANK BANK DALAM MALAYSIA**  
THE ASSOCIATION OF BANKS IN MALAYSIA

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Page: 2



## Think before acting on a phone call

WE'VE all heard about Macau scams, right?

Yet this year, the number of cases has reached 1,258 between Jan 1 and April 19, involving RM65.4mil in losses. Last year, 1,585 cases were reported nationwide, resulting in RM560.8mil in losses.

Why do we keep falling for these scammers despite the media reporting every other day on such cases and the police repeatedly warning us of them?

Perhaps because they are very effective and scammers count on people reacting in panic.

A Macau scam often starts with a phone call from someone pretending to be an officer from a bank or government or law enforcement agency or debt collector. The person will then claim that the 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 funds to an account designated by the "officer" or face "dire consequences" – and usually, victims will panic and scramble to follow instructions.

The account usually belongs to a

"mule" whether in the know or innocent; the money then gets transferred out quickly into a series of accounts, making it almost impossible for the police to trace and recover it.

Since the Employees' Provident Fund (EPF) special withdrawal facility was introduced recently, there is another type of scam on the rise: An email arrives informing recipients that online access to their EPF account has been blocked.

In a Facebook post on Dec 10, EPF informed its i-Akaun users to ignore such emails, which are part of a

phishing attack in which scammers use social engineering to trick the victim into revealing sensitive information – aka Personally Identifiable Information (PII) – or deploying malicious software like ransomware that locks away access to accounts.

According to the police, a new tactic by Macau scam syndicates is to target Tabung Haji account holders. So far, there have been 65 cases amounting to RM3.6mil in losses.

Don't assume you will never fall for these tricks as history has shown that the victim could be anyone.

A 77-year-old widow lost almost RM1.19mil after receiving a call from a woman claiming to be from the Inland Revenue Board (LHDN) and a 39-year-old teacher lost almost RM395,000 after she got a similar call. A Kelantan assemblyman lost RM84,529 to a scammer posing as a Melaka LHDN officer.

Beware of scammers! As the police have repeatedly reminded us, do not divulge banking details or sensitive information to a third party. If you get an alarming phone call, take a breath and think before you say or do anything.