



Headline: Scammers getting smarter now and so should we
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Penang

Being forearmed with knowledge is key to not falling prey to well-trained scammers >6

Scammers getting smarter now and so should we

Arm yourself with knowledge to identify a swindler

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Pinang points

RIGHT before my eyes, I witnessed my friend falling for a classic Macau scam over the phone.

The call from a “government official” had him hooked. Frantically, I gestured to my friend to end the call but he was like a man possessed.

Someone on the other end of the line, claiming to be a government official, informed my worried friend that he had been implicated in a crime of sorts and the only way to escape the consequences was to transfer his money into a “safe account”.

After 45 minutes on the phone, he sent RM5,000 to one such bank account, and this happened on his pay day!

Recalling the incident, my friend said the caller was so convincing and believable that it was hard to cut the line.

This incident came to mind when the long arm of the law finally caught up with Tedy Teow, the founder of MBI (Mobility Beyond Imagination) well-known for its superlative money-making scheme.

He was detained in Thailand about a week ago and is believed to be wanted for questioning over several money-laundering cases in a few countries.

From what I could tell, the news failed to generate much interest on the ground, especially in Penang where the scheme used to have a large number of followers.

It could be that many of his vic-



There's a scam being created every day so be on high alert.
— Filepic

tims were resigned to the fact that their money was as good as gone, even though Teow got arrested.

I have many acquaintances who put money into MBI. A few earned some returns. Most did not.

Now, it is “successful” Macau scams that are dominating the chatter in coffeshops, offices, watering holes and messaging groups.

Indeed, teachers, engineers, doctors and even a politician were among the prized scalps of these so-called officers from banks or government and law enforcement agencies.

In May, a businessman from Port Dickson with a net worth of over RM100mil lost a record RM21mil in one such scam after he allegedly revealed his bank Transaction Authorisation Code (TAC) numbers to a “bank official”.

A sizeable number of scam victims were retirees who lost their hard-earned savings.

As pointed out in one news report, these scammers actually go through a month-long boot camp conducted by professional

trainers before they are sent out for con jobs.

Psychology, negotiation skills, the art of persuasion, they learn it all.

They go through gauntlets of role-playing, with one being the “victim” and the other the scam caller, all under the watchful eyes of the trainers.

It has become challenging these days for lawmen to outfox the syndicates which have members even sitting for exams before being certified competent enough to man scam call centres.

And now we hear of increasing cases of dubious bank transfers: money being unknowingly transferred out of savings and fixed deposit accounts after victims were said to have downloaded phone apps.

Protect yourself by not downloading apps from dubious sites!

Then there are the online lovers to whom the lonely give their money even though they have never met face to face.

For those not in the know, this actually happens gradually.

First, the amounts asked for are

small. These are quickly returned with a small but appreciable profit. Only after trust is established will the scammer ask for the big amounts.

The situation has never been more urgent as there are still victims who fall prey to such tactics almost on a daily basis.

If you get a call from a scammer, stay calm and rightfully hesitate when asked to reveal your personal banking and user login details.

In the course of a true fraud investigation, government and law enforcement agencies will not transfer calls among themselves. Bank Negara will not transfer your calls to Bukit Aman and vice versa, and never call back the number that was given.

Remember, the police will never threaten to arrest you over the phone; they prefer to do it face to face.

And if it's a pre-recorded message, just hang up.

Most importantly, if you are a law-abiding citizen who has done nothing wrong, there is indeed nothing to fear.