



Headline: We keep getting scammed, why?
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We keep getting scammed, why?

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IF there's one issue that hasn't gone away, it's falling prey to scams. Whether it's in the name of love or clearing your name from a supposed blacklist, scammers have become experts at identifying our fears or desires, and thoroughly exploiting them.

Last year, Selangor alone reportedly recorded 4,140 commercial crimes involving cheating with losses amounting to RM360.7 million. According to the Selangor Commercial Crimes Investigations Department, 927 cases were classified under the popular Macau scam, and victims lost a total of RM50.4 million.

The Macau scam refers to a set method used by scammers, where targets usually receive a phone call from someone pretending to be from a government agency, the police, a bank or finance company. The potential victim is then told that he or she owes money or has an outstanding fine. If payment is not settled within a given timeframe, there will be consequences.

Then there are online scams, often promising easy money or true love. When it comes to online love, the stories usually follow a similar pattern, targeting single women looking for a relationship. These are the scams I find hardest to understand, because this goes beyond money. The heartless toy with matters of the heart, ignorant of the damage they cause.

In my opinion, the real loss when it comes to getting scammed goes beyond simply losing money. For many, it spells financial ruin and the absence of security for the future. We live in a world where money talks, and without it one can feel helpless and hopeless.

We talk so much about mental health and how Malaysians are increasingly stressed. Instead of just finding ways to cope with stress, we should be creating a society where people are risk-aware and able to make good choices.

The seriousness of these white-collar crimes has not slipped past the authorities, but sometimes I fear we take scams for granted due to their non-violent, quieter



nature. Thanks to greater accountability and more widespread reporting of the issue, awareness is improving. But it takes more than awareness, it takes action as well.

First, be humble enough to admit that you're not untouchable. Don't think you're beyond their reach, because even the mighty have fallen. We can say, "Oh, it'll never happen to me", until it does. Scammers are experts at preying on our emotions, catching us in our frail and vulnerable moments.

Next, do your best to stay cautious and vigilant. If an unknown number calls or you receive an email or chat message from someone you don't know, immediately be on alert. If the offer sounds too good to be true, then it really might be.

It doesn't help that we seem to be distrusting of the police force, or doubtful of their abilities. While they're not perfect, the police know their job and many of its officers are willing to help. So go straight to the police if you receive a suspicious call or offer, and not after the money has left your hands.

One more thing we can do is to help each other.

Some of us may be more aware of the threat than others, and successfully fend off scammers.

If that happens, it's not enough to share the screenshots online and have a good laugh with netizens. Make the effort to alert the police via numerous channels available, from WhatsApp to online portals.

We need to do our part to create a secure environment for ourselves, not just sit waiting for the authorities to solve all our problems. Getting scammed is something that seems so surreal, and impossible, until it happens to us.

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