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### NEW MODUS OPERANDI

# Scammers keep hair salon worker on the line for 4 hours

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Phone scammers are targeting victims through the landline, unlike the modus operandi of calling people via mobile phones.

A victim, who wanted to be known only as Goh, become RM14,900 poorer through this type of phone scam and continues to be harassed by the same scammer.

While relating his experience at the MCA Public Services and Complaints Department at Wisma MCA here, Goh said he was on the line with the scammers for four hours in the first incident on Tuesday.

Goh said he received a call from a person who introduced himself as Fuad about 10.30am.

He said he was attached to a Melaka court.

"A person known as Fuad called my office to ask about my employer's contribution to the Employees Provident Fund.

"Later, Fuad passed the phone

to a person known as Sergeant Chan, who claimed to be working with the Melaka police.

"He gave me a number to call to prove his identity. In the background; I could hear sounds of people busy at work in an office so I somehow believed that he was calling from a police station.

Chan told Goh that the latter had applied for a credit card from Hong Leong Bank, which had an outstanding amount of RM16,430.30.

"I never applied for this card. In an authoritative tone, he accused me of having sold this credit card to a guy name Ong Kai Chin for money laundering.

"I believed him because I had lost my identification card five years ago. I thought that my identification card might have been misused. Hence, what he said seemed believable to me."

Chan then instructed Goh to give his online banking details, including the password, to facil-

itate an investigation.

"I was told that my money will be transferred to an Anti-Money Laundering officer, who will investigate the matter for me.

"At that time, I felt terrified for various reasons. I was scared that I would have a bad record with the bank and would not be able to secure any loans in the future.

"I was also worried that my family would find out and this would upset them."

At one point in his four-hour conversation, the person on the other end of the line convinced Goh to give his handphone number on the pretext of having a quieter conversation away from his noisy hair salon.

"I was told to go to my car. I hung up and the conversation continued on my handphone."

After giving his password, Goh received a notification via SMS saying that his daily limit at his Maybank account had been changed.

He received subsequent text messages saying that RM3,100 and RM9,900 were transferred in separate transactions from his Maybank account to his Public Bank account.

Later, he received other text messages saying that RM4,900 and RM10,000 from his Public Bank account were transferred to a CIMB bank account belonging to a person known as Norsiha, whom Chan explained was an Anti-Money Laundering officer.

He said Chan instructed him to update his location every two hours to see if he was in contact with Ong, who was accused as Goh's partner-in-crime in money laundering activities.

"I agreed to all of this because I wanted to clear my name," he said.

When Goh returned to the hair salon, his boss asked him where he had gone. When he related what happened, his boss said Goh might have fallen victim to a phone scam.

He lodged a report at the Pantai police station that same day. He then sought help from the MCA Public Services and Complaints Department on Wednesday.

"But the scammer is still contacting me to press me to apply for a bank loan," he said.

MCA Public Services and Complaints Department head Datuk Seri Michael Chong warned the public against this new modus operandi.

"Clearly, they are various people involved. This Norsiha could likely be a victim whose account is now illicitly used to dupe other people. This is a way to conceal transactions."

He said this year, the department received six complaints, from four women and two men conned in phone scams.

"Scamming activities are a serious issue as the losses that were reported to us amounted to about RM1.65 million in just six cases."