



Headline: First they spam, then they scam
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First they spam, then they scam

Syndicates making more and more unsolicited calls to trick Malaysians

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PETALING JAYA: If you've been getting a flood of automated phone calls lately about outstanding traffic summonses or a parcel delivery you know nothing about, here's the likely reason.

Statistics from an anti-spam mobile application show that over the past 12 months, Macau, parcel and other scam syndicates have been making more calls to trick Malaysians into handing over money.

Truecaller – which claims to have 150 million daily active users worldwide – said there has been a 24% jump in the average number of spam calls received by its one million users in Malaysia this year compared to 2018.

The mobile app, which has offices in Sweden, the United States and India, said it has helped users in Malaysia identify and block 90 million spam calls so far this year, typically from telemarketers offering telecommunications, insurance and credit card products and services.

Scam calls are a form of fraudulent activity with the goal of stealing the victim's money.

Last year, scam calls – including those by Macau Scam syndicates – made up a mere 1% of spam calls received by the app's Malaysian users.

This year, the figure has ballooned to a whopping 63%, according to the Truecaller Insights 2019 report.

The Macau, parcel and "Astro" scams are among the top scams in the country over the past year, the report noted.

The modus operandi of a Macau Scam is by impersonating someone with authority, such as a policeman or a bank officer, and convince the victims over the phone that they need to

pay money to avoid trouble.

For parcel scams (which are also sometimes referred to in Malaysia as love scams), the scammer would strike up a relationship with the victims online, and then convince them to send money so that a parcel said to contain a valuable gift for the victim can be "released by authorities".

In the Astro scam, someone impersonating a representative from the satellite TV provider would call a potential victim to deliver a warning.

"Input we've gotten is that they would say you have an unpaid bill and that needs to be paid right away, otherwise you'll be reported for it," a Truecaller representative said.

The report's findings are reflected in official figures on losses suffered by the victims.

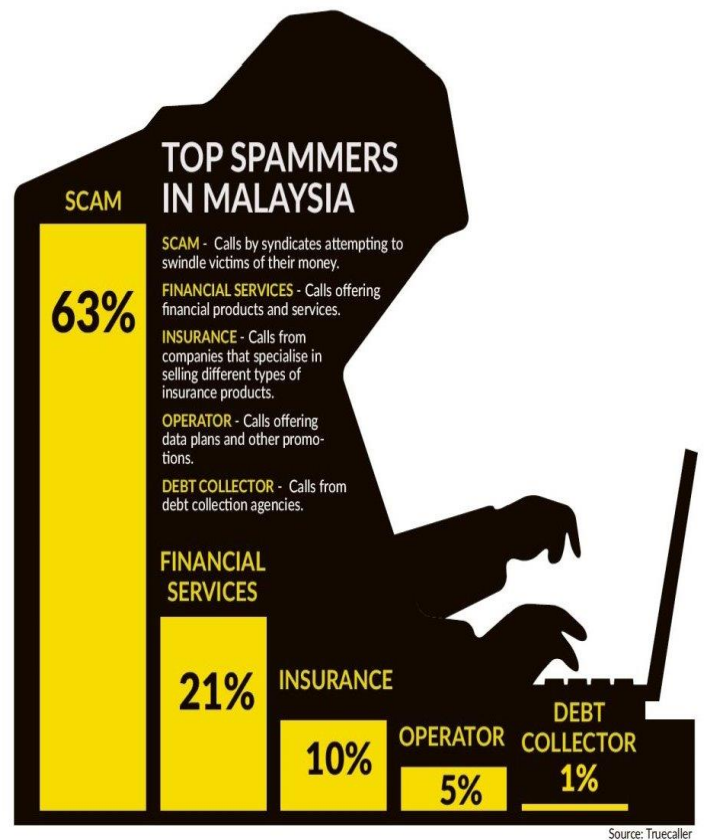
Police statistics show that of the five currently active syndicated commercial crime cases this year, investment scams took the number one spot, recording the biggest losses at RM200.78mil, with Macau Scam in second and parcel scams third.

On Nov 12, Deputy Home Minister Datuk Mohd Azis Jamman said 1,911 Malaysians lost RM94.04mil to Macau Scam this year, while 1,303 lost RM67.74mil to parcel scams.

According to the Truecaller report, Malaysia is the mobile app's 19th most spammed country. In first place is Brazil, where Truecaller users receive an average of 45.6 unsolicited calls a month, followed by Peru (30.9), Indonesia (27.9), Mexico (25.7) and India (25.6).

While Malaysia may not be the most spammed country it does hold another unsavoury record.

"Analysing this year's data, we can see that Malaysia is the market that receives the biggest percentage of scam calls in the world,"



the report said.

Malaysia is trailed by Australia (60%), Lebanon (49%), Canada (48%), and South Africa (39%).

The police have a Facebook account, Cyber Crime Alert Royal Malaysia Police (<https://www.facebook.com/CyberCrimeAlertRMP/>) to

warn the public about scams.

A web portal set up by the police, <http://ccid.rmp.gov.my/semaknule>, allows people to verify telephone numbers and bank accounts that could be used for scamming.