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# Scammers now target rich people

## Elderly businessmen, retirees and royalty duped of millions, say police

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**PONTIAN:** Police are tracking down a syndicate that has been targeting those with fat bank accounts.

This racket, responsible for dozens of Macau Scam cases nationwide, has raked in millions of ringgit in recent months.

Most of the victims are from Penang, Johor and Selangor, comprising elderly businessmen, retirees and even royalty.

One of the latest cases saw a businesswoman in her 60s lodging a police report alleging that she was

duped of more than RM1.7mil.

Sources said in the past, Macau Scam victims would usually lose several thousands or hundreds of thousands of ringgit but of late, some were reportedly cheated of more than RM1mil.

It is learnt that the syndicate has been able to get personal details on the dark web, including property addresses, family details and other information.

In almost all the cases, the suspects either impersonate a courier company worker or police officer, claiming that the victim is being investigated for illegal activities or

money laundering.

In the latest case in Pekan Nanas, the businesswoman claimed she received a call in June from a senior police officer with the rank of ASP, alleging that she was involved in a money-laundering racket.

In just over one month, syndicate members managed to convince the victim to transfer between RM100,000 and RM500,000 to an "investigation account".

The fraudsters kept assuring the victim that the money would be returned via the Johor Baru court once the case was resolved.

After two months, the woman

suspected something amiss and told her children, who accompanied her to lodge a report several days ago.

OPCD Supt Mustafa Bakri Salleh confirmed the case. He urged the public to be more alert and to contact the police hotline at 07-221 2999 if they received such calls from strangers.

Last month, Johor police crippled a Macau Scam syndicate with the arrest of 12 members and seizure of high-end communications technology.

The suspects, aged between 20 and 45, posed as police, Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission Immig-

ration Department, Customs Department, Inland Revenue Board, court and Pos Malaysia officials.

The Macau Scam often starts with a phone call from someone pretending to be an officer from a bank, government agency or debt collector.

The scammer will then claim that the potential victim owes money, has an unpaid fine or is involved in undesirable activities, often with a very short window of less than an hour to settle the payment or they will face "dire consequences".

The victims will be asked to make payments to get them off the hook.