



Headline: 'Beware of loan scammers'
Publication/Portal: The Star
Date: 20 September 2020

Language: English
Section: Nation
Page: 14

'Beware of loan scammers'

Syndicates out to capitalise on economic uncertainties

By **FATIMAH ZAINAL**
fatimah@thestar.com.my

PETALING JAYA: Capitalising on the economic uncertainties caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, scammers are attempting to con Malaysians who may be in need of a financial lifeline.

Banks have been warning of syndicate members impersonating as bank officers and sending messages via mobile numbers or social media platforms to offer "loans and financial relief" to unsuspecting victims.

Between January and August this year, the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC) resolved 437 out of 515 complaints on spam Short Message Service (SMS), including loan scams.

MCMC said it viewed the issue seriously and would direct telecommunication companies to block spam numbers immediately upon receiving complaints from the public or requests from the relevant enforcement agencies.

"MCMC's assertiveness in addressing these issues is to ensure that the interest and safety of consumers are protected.

"To ensure that consumers are not deceived by spamming activities, they are advised to first and foremost lodge a police report so that an investigation can proceed regarding the matter.

"MCMC will provide assistance in the form of technical expertise to the police when required," MCMC told *Sunday Star*.

Apart from that, consumers could also utilise the police's "Semakmule" portal via the link <https://ccid.rmp.gov.my/semakmule/> to avoid becoming a fraud victim, said MCMC.



This year, people around the world have become more reliant on technology to stay connected with communities, families and friends. Unfortunately, cyber criminals know this and are looking to exploit it, which is why it is more important than ever that anyone using an online service stays vigilant against phishing attacks and other security scams.

Facebook



The government's *sebenarnya.my* portal, which can be used to check the authenticity of news content, also has a section called "Waspada" to remind consumers of the latest fraudulent tactics.

"Consumers are advised to be vigilant and well informed on their rights and laws when contacted by any individual or party, whether via SMS or social media.

"The ability to assess the accuracy, perspective and validity of any communication

received is one of the competencies that anyone should always prepare themselves for in the face of such situations," said MCMC in its statement.

Meanwhile, a Facebook spokesperson said apart from encouraging users to report any suspicious activity, it also invested heavily in strengthening its technology to keep scams away from the platform.

Currently, Facebook has over 35,000 people working on safety and security issues across the company, more than three times as many it had in 2017, the spokesperson said.

"This year, people all around the world have become more reliant on technology to stay connected with communities, families and friends," said the spokesperson.

"Unfortunately, cyber criminals know this and are looking to exploit it, which is why it is more important than ever that anyone using an online service stays vigilant against phishing attacks and other security scams.

"Facebook also has a zero-tolerance policy on scams and always takes immediate action to remove illegal activities on our platform."

Association of Banks Malaysia (ABM) executive director Kalpana Sambasivamurthy also cautioned the public to be vigilant against scams involving purported bank agents in assisting the affected segments to obtain targeted repayment assistance.

"Our member banks do not appoint nor engage third parties to assist bank customers in obtaining targeted repayment assistance," she said.

ABM encouraged bank customers to contact their banks directly to discuss their repayment options or for verification, said Kalpana.