



Headline: 'LHDN does not deal with public over the phone'  
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AS JOURNALISTS, we are always on the alert for fake news and scams. But when a Macau scam syndicate targeted me, I confess I was shaken.

I am relaying the episode in detail with the hope that readers will take heed.

One recent Saturday, I was disturbed by a phone call supposedly from Kedah Inland Revenue Board (LHDN), a state I visit only for work purposes. It was an automated voice message — a “last warning” about unpaid taxes.

I pay my taxes so I smiled and sensed a scam attempt. But before I could hang up, the call quickly connected to a man who read out my identity card number and full name.

He mouthed a string of numbers that I was to repeat to his superior whom he proceeded to connect me to for further “action”.

The next man was one “Harban Singh”, a legal officer of Kedah LHDN, purportedly.

Harban was stern, impolite, imperious and warned me that the phone conversation was being recorded.

He declared that I owned a company called “Newest Enterprise” registered in Alor Setar with overdue taxes amount-

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### Pinang points

ing to RM17,600.76. I don’t know why he intoned “76sen” with so much emphasis. He even gave me the company’s registration number.

He added that I would be blacklisted if I did not make a police report and he would connect me to Kedah police headquarters to do so.

When he asked what I did for a living, I said I was a journalist, hoping that alone would ward him off, but it didn’t.

Since inter-district travel was disallowed, he insisted that if I could not lodge a police report in Kedah by 3.30pm, I would be blacklisted.

Though I insisted that I did not own a company that apparently sold real estate, he insisted I make the report, claiming I must have misplaced my identity card or given a photostat copy to someone.

I said I would go to the Penang LHDN office and deal with it there but he said it would do no good.

I told him I knew that police reports could not be made over the phone. He replied that there was a new ruling that allowed it because of the movement control order.

Ironically, when I called him out on it, he blustered angrily that I was wasting his time.

Now, I have what I call a “text a friend” option, so while speaking to Harban, I texted fellow journalist Imran Hilmy.

He is our guiding light for the crime beat.

Imran told me to play along with Harban, who was getting increasingly agitated on the phone.

Harban called me uncooperative and said I would have to

“deal with the consequences”.

That man made me repeat information about my alleged unpaid taxes that he had told me, and wanted to know if I was at work or at home, along with other details.

He was so stern and told me he was unhappy that I responded only with “okay” and “fine”.

I asked him for his office identification info and he said, “PGE99113”.

I eventually let him connect me to the “police station”.

The next and final man was even worse than Harban; he was utterly obnoxious and belligerent.

When I repeated that I was a journalist, he asked if I was crazy. By then, I had had enough and hung up.

We have written about such Macau scams countless of times. Although this issue has been going on for years, people still fall for them.

I decided to contact Penang Commercial Crime chief Asst Comm Mohd Rosni Mohd Lazim because in all honesty, despite knowing better, the phone con-

versation made me anxious.

ACP Mohd Rosni was quick to respond with advice that needs to be shared with everyone.

“Any agency of authority will never deal with the public over the phone,” he said.

“Whether there is MCO or not, banks, the police and LHDN will always deal with you in person.

“There is no way you can make a police report over the phone.

“When it comes to having a company registered under your name, only Companies Commission of Malaysia will have those details and not LHDN.

“In a situation like this, tell them you will go to the office personally and check.

“These are not things people deal with over the phone.”

ACP Rosni said the key point to remember is that any authority will never deal with you through the phone.

“Do not be afraid of them and they (actual government agencies) do not work on weekends.

“And the police will always want to speak to you face to face,” he reiterated.