

Media Title : The Star
Headline : Dangerous deepfakes
Date : 24 June 2023
Section : Nation
Page : 6



Dangerous deepfakes

Scammers prey on social media using impostor accounts

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PETALING JAYA: Deepfake technology, which uses artificial intelligence to manipulate videos, has become a tool for scammers.

The celebrity promoting a product may not really be that person. Instead, it could be scammers posing as the celebrity.

Celebrity impostor scams are fake posts using photographs and artificial intelligence (AI) videos of famous people on social media accounts to lure people into making financial investments or buy products.

These days, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram are filled with such fake celebrity accounts set up to deceive devoted fans.

Scammers con the real star's followers into making donations to charity, buying exclusive tickets or entering into investment deals which will definitely be profitable or a fee to win big prizes.

Cyberlaw expert Derek Fernandez said the scammers now were very clever, pointing out a recent case in China where the latest technology – the new AI face-changing app – was used to defraud the head of a company of 4.3 million yuan (RM2.8mil) in just 10 minutes.

Local scammers are not far behind, he said, as local celebrities and famous people like politicians seem to be popping up on

Don't be a scam victim

To avoid being scammed, the National Scam Response Centre has advised these:

- > Search online the celebrity's name with the word "scam" to see if it has been connected to impostor schemes.
- > Don't engage with a supposed celebrity on an unverified social media account, even if the person doesn't initially ask for money.
- > Report online celebrity impersonators to the relevant social network. Facebook, Twitter and Instagram have procedures for reporting fake accounts.
- > Call the National Scam Response Centre at 997 to report the scam.
- > Don't give personal information or send money via a gift card, wire transfer, prepaid debit card or peer-to-peer payment app to someone you don't know and have only communicated with online, no matter how supposedly famous the person is.
- > Don't believe claims about why a purported celebrity account has an unusual handle, for example, that it's a private account the star keeps secret from his or her management.

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social media accounts urging one to invest or buy currencies.

"Celebrity impostor scammers can be charged under Section 233 of the Communications and

Multimedia Act 1988 (Act 588)," said Fernandez.

The Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC) could even haul up inter-

net service providers (ISPs) and their directors for misuse of their network by scammers.

The MCMC, in a statement, said it was urging all over-the-top (OTT) platforms, like YouTube and Netflix, to cooperate in this regard.

"MCMC will be reminding internet service providers (ISPs) regarding their legal obligations under Section 263 of the Communications and Multimedia Act 1998 (Act 588).

"ISPs are required to use their best endeavour to prevent their network facilities from being used for any illegal activities in Malaysia.

"This includes improving their detection, identification and elimination of scam sites and contents, and cooperating with MCMC in combating such illegal activities.

"MCMC takes a firm stance against any form of scamming and fraud," it said.

Fernandez said that Section 233 criminalises online content that is obscene, indecent, false, menacing or offensive in character with intent to annoy, abuse, threaten or harass another person.

If convicted, an offender could be fined not more than RM50,000 or imprisonment for up to one year or both.

He also said that, depending on the case details, celebrity impostor scammers can be charged under the Penal Code.