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FRAUD PREVENTION

FEAR IS SCAMMERS' BEST WEAPON

LOSSES due to scams have increased. In 2023, financial losses due to scams totalled RM1.34 billion, based on scams lodged with the National Scam Response Centre.

Police reported that senior citizens made up 20 per cent of the RM2.7 billion lost to scams between 2021 and 2023.

The centre said the top three scams were e-commerce, loan scams and investment scams.

Between January 2021 and August 2023, 26,663 e-commerce scams, 10,759 loan scams and 9,640 other scams were reported.

For investment scams, the financial value of losses more than doubled from RM209 million in 2022 to RM437 million in 2023.

In most cases, victims were unable to recover their losses.

Scams are evolving. It has been reported that scammers are implanting malware in digital wedding invitation cards.

The most common strategy is emotional manipulation, using fear-based tactics, such as impersonating police, Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC), Customs or Inland Revenue Board officers.

Scammers create situations with tight deadlines, such as getting arrested or getting high returns only if investments are made imme-



Scammers often create an urgency with tight deadlines to trap their victims. FILE PIC

diately.

Another way is the sunk-cost strategy where scammers trick people into investing small amounts, making them feel they need to put in more money because they have already spent some, hoping to get it

back later.

Scammers may also follow government aid schemes to reach out to beneficiaries to scam them.

Other scams are Macau scams, job scams and love scams.

Here are tips to protect ourselves

from scams:

FIRST, when callers, emails or phone message ask for your personal details, especially banking data, stop responding immediately;

SECOND, scammers often threaten people — “you will be arrested”,

“you will be charged under the Anti-Money Laundering Act”, “you have committed a criminal act” or “someone has used your account or credit card”; and,

THIRD, never move money to another account when contacted by someone claiming to be from a bank. Banks never ask clients to do that.

If someone asks for your account details to pay for a job you have done, be cautious.

Check if it is from a trusted source.

Do not call Bank Negara, police, MACC or Customs Department.

Check the correct number from their website and call to verify.

If you are promised returns that are too good to be true, it probably is.

If you encounter scams or suspicious activities, report them to the authorities, such as the National Scam Response Centre or the police.

Your actions will prevent others from becoming victims.

With scams becoming more sophisticated, the best protection is self-protection.

So the Federation of Malaysian Consumers Associations (Fomca) calls on the authorities to intensify efforts to educate the public, especially vulnerable consumers, about scams.

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