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AT LEAST one person is duped and falls victim to Macau scams statewide every day and many of them are women.

Johor police chief Comm Datuk Kamarul Zaman Mamat said over the last three years, 1,203 people – 723 women and 480 men – had fallen victim to such syndicates with losses amounting to a staggering RM69mil.

“More than 472 people fell victim to such syndicates with losses amounting to RM27.5mil last year.

“We have noticed an increase of almost 40.5% of Macau scam cases since the international borders reopened in April last year after Covid-19 restrictions were lifted,” he said, adding that most of the victims were between 21 and 40 years old.

He said Macau scams involved cyber criminals impersonating government officials from Bank Negara, the police, Customs and Inland Revenue Board who intimidate victims by claiming they were involved in illegal activities such as money laundering, have unpaid fines or other crimes.

“They are then directed to make a report over the telephone and asked to transfer money to a separate account by coaxing victims into believing that their money will be confiscated if they do not move it to another account,” he added.

Comm Kamarul Zaman said the suspects also asked victims for access to their online banking accounts.

“The victims only realise that they have been duped when all their money is transferred out,” he said, adding that many have lost their life savings to syndicates.

He said there have also been

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Macau scam cases in Johor from 2020 to 2022

Year	Victims	Losses (RM)	Sex		Age Group			
			M	F	0-20	21-40	41-60	61 and above
2020	450	27,249,153	190	260	4	209	163	74
2021	281	14,282,730	107	174	9	121	107	44
2022	472	27,532,082	183	289	9	241	156	66

Source: Johor Commercial Crimes Investigations Department

TheStar graphics



“More than 472 people fell victim to such syndicates with losses amounting to RM27.5mil last year,” says Comm Kamarul Zaman.

cases lately with some impersonating insurance agents asking victims about their claims, or government pharmacist informing victims that they have taken more medication than those allocated to them.

“Other tactics include tricking victims into thinking they have won a lucky draw from Shopee or Big Pay and also duping people

into believe that they can release detainees from police lock-ups.

“The scammers are constantly trying out new ways to trick victims. The police are also tracking down and arresting those responsible.

“In the last three years, 355 people involved in Macau scams statewide, including mule account holders, were arrested,” he added.

Mule accounts refer to banking accounts that are “rented” or sold to syndicates.

He added that Johor police also busted at least 18 places operating as call centres for Macau scams, online gambling, job offer fraud and investment scams, which were often located in housing estates and outskirts areas.

Asked how Macau scams operate, Comm Kamarul Zaman said there was a hierarchy but those arrested at call centres were bottom-tier individuals receiving salary and commission from their supervisors.

“They do not know those above them.

“All payments are in cash,” he said, adding that the supervisors too had no idea who their superiors were as dealings were done via social media and they have never met.

Comm Kamarul Zaman said each recruit was given a manual to read-up on conning victims which they easily mastered within a week.

“They are also paid well with a basic salary of up to RM5,000 with additional commission,” he said.

He urged the public not to reveal their banking details to anyone over a telephone conversation or social media.

“If in doubt go to your bank to check or call the police hotline at 07-2212 999 to make enquiries,” he said.

Comm Kamarul Zaman urged the public to also use the Semak Mule mobile application and <https://semakmule.rmp.gov.my> to check if any bank accounts or phone numbers have been associated with suspicious activities to avoid falling victim to scams.