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Section : Police
Page : 17

Money laundering probe scams woman of RM71,000

KUCHING: A local woman was duped out of RM71,000 after falling for a phone scam that began with a call from someone claiming to be from an insurance company and ended with a fake "police investigation".

In March this year, the 54-year-old received a call from an unknown individual claiming to be a representative from Etiqa Takaful headquarters.

The victim was told she had made a health insurance claim, which she denied.

Following that, the call was transferred to another person claiming to be an investigating officer from Ampang police station, who accused the victim of being involved in money laundering.

Kuching police chief ACP Alexson Naga Chabu said the victim was instructed to make payments for a financial investigation fund and a reporting fund to avoid being charged with the alleged offence.

"Fearful of being charged, the woman followed the caller's instructions and made 14 transactions into 11 different bank accounts between May 30 and Oct 4.

"She ended up losing RM71,000 in the process," he said.

The victim has since lodged a report with Kuching Commercial Crime Investigation Division (CCID) on Monday (Oct 20) for further investigation.

The case is being investigated under Section 420 of the Penal Code for cheating and dishonestly inducing the delivery of property, which carries imprisonment of up to 10 years, whipping, and a fine, upon conviction.

For the record, Kuching CCID has recorded a total of 90 cases involving the same modus operandi from Jan 1 to Oct 20 this year, with total losses amounting to RM4,609,375.50.

Alexson reminded the public not to panic or entertain calls from unknown numbers claiming to be from government or enforcement agencies.

"Hang up immediately — enforcement agencies do not conduct investigations or transfer calls over the phone," he said.

He also urged the public not to transfer money or share banking information with strangers, and to contact the National Scam Response Centre (NSRC) at 997 for any advice or complaints related to scam crimes.