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Online 'kuih scam' turns into RM10,000 loss for woman

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JOHOR BARU: A woman's attempt to order nyonya kuih online ended with her losing about RM10,000 after scammers apparently hijacked her mobile phone and drained her bank accounts.

The 51-year-old victim, who wanted to be known only as Teoh, said the incident happened after she clicked on an online advertisement for nyonya kuih last Dec 25.

"I was redirected to WhatsApp, where I chatted with the supposed seller about placing an order.

"I enquired about prices and was sent a menu. When I told the person that I could not find the item I wanted, he called me and told me to click on the 'read more' option to view more products," she said in an interview.

Teoh did as instructed but still could not find the kuih she wanted. The man then sent her another document via WhatsApp and told her to accept it by clicking the link.

"That was when my phone started glitching, with random images appearing on the screen. It also briefly went dark several times.

"The man asked me how I usually log into my online banking accounts, and which bank I used, saying he could help me obtain discount vouchers," she recalled.

Teoh believes she had given the individual access to her phone during their conversation.

"I told him that I use fingerprint authentication for my banking apps. When a fingerprint prompt appeared on my phone screen, the caller told me to authenticate it, and I followed his instruction without thinking much of it."

She then heard typing sounds in the caller's background. Feeling suspicious, she hung up. After that, her phone screen went dark, so she immediately removed her SIM card.

"About 10 minutes later, my sister contacted my husband after she received a message from my phone number asking for help to transfer money.

"She was concerned that I was in trouble, but I told her I did not send such a message. Then I realised the scammers had hacked my phone to ask others for money.

"I contacted my banks to freeze my accounts, only to be informed that four transactions had already been made, amounting to about RM10,000," Teoh said, adding that the transfers also involved her fixed deposit account.

She lodged a police report the same night and was told that several other victims had fallen prey to a similar scam that resulted in their phones being hacked.

Johor Baru South OCPD Asst Comm Raub Selamat confirmed the report and said investigations are ongoing.