



Online scams on the rise in Sabah

KOTA KINABALU: The Sabah State Legislative Assembly received an update on the prevalence of online fraud cases within the state.

Chief Minister Datuk Seri Panglima Hajiji Noor in response to a question from nominated assemblyman Datuk Seri Panglima Yong Teck Lee, revealed a concerning rise in reported scams over the past three years.

A total of 1,169 cases were recorded in 2021, 1,206 cases in 2022, 1,818 cases in 2023, and 402 cases were recorded in 2024 as of March.

Data from the Sabah Police Contingent Commercial Crime Investigation Department (JSJK) exposes a troubling trend: 4,595 scam cases documented between 2021 and March 2024. This data mirrors a global phenomenon, highlighting the



Datuk Seri
Panglima Yong
Teck Lee

growing threat of fraudulent activities in Sabah.

The breakdown of the reported cases reveals online purchase scams as the most prevalent, with a staggering 1,818 cases. Phone scams (1,296 cases), non-existent loan scams (596 cases), investment scams (586 cases), and love scams (118 cases) also represent significant threats.

Additionally, 181 reports fell under offences outlined in the Computer Crimes Act 1997.

Hajiji emphasised the

collaborative efforts undertaken by the Central and State Governments to tackle this issue.

These initiatives include:

Increased Public Awareness Campaigns: The JSJK Sabah Contingent of the Royal Malaysian Police (PDRM) has significantly ramped up public awareness campaigns. These efforts encompass talks, casual chats, media interviews, community events, and collaborations with government and private agencies. The number of such programs has grown steadily, i.e. 156 programs in 2021, 343 in 2022, 439 in 2023 and reached 112 in the first quarter of 2024 alone.

Online Scam-Checking Tools: The PDRM has established the SemakMule portal (<https://semakmule.rmp.gov.my/>) allowing the public to verify

bank accounts or phone numbers potentially linked to scammers.

National Anti-Scam Tour: The Ministry of Communications and Digital conducted a Sabah leg of the 2023 National Anti-Scam Tour, raising awareness at Universiti Malaysia Sabah on 28 October 2023.

Educational Drama Series: The TV drama series "Dokudrama Cyber999" based on real cybercrime cases, broadcasted nationwide on TV1, aimed to educate viewers on various cyber threats and scams (available also at <https://rtmklik.rtm.gov.my/play/program/cyber999> or <https://youtube.com/@CyberSecurityMY>).

State Government Initiatives: Since 2022, the Sabah State Government has implemented six targeted programs around Keningau, Sandakan, Tawau, and

Kota Kinabalu, to educate some 700 civil servants on cybercrime. Plans are underway to extend these initiatives to the general public. A total of 15 training or awareness programs have been held since 2022.

While acknowledging the challenges in curbing this global trend, Hajiji stressed the continued importance of these efforts.

He highlighted the State Government's commitment to working alongside the Federal Government and various stakeholders to enhance public awareness and empower citizens to identify and avoid scams.

Sabah residents are encouraged to stay vigilant and utilise the resources provided to protect themselves from falling victim to fraudulent activities.