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Take heed of evolving scam tactics via WhatsApp call, public warned

KUCHING: Stampin MP Chong Chieng Jen's special assistant Michael Kong has cautioned the public about evolving scam tactics, citing a recent case involving a victim who allegedly fell prey via a WhatsApp call.

Kong said the victim, identified as Chan, had come across a Facebook advertisement promoting home-cooked food and made a call to the alleged vendor via WhatsApp.

"During the call, the individual insisted on sending her a menu, but Chan declined as she already had a specific dish in mind.

"When the caller persisted, she ended the call out of frustration. However, within minutes, the victim noticed her phone behaving abnormally," he said in a statement.

Kong said Chan's son later informed her that multiple contacts had received messages from her number requesting money.

"Alarmed, Chan immediately contacted her bank and discovered three unauthorised transactions from her savings account and one from her credit card account.

"Despite lodging a dispute with the bank, her claim was rejected on the basis that her user ID and password were used to access her account, and that her device might have been compromised due to malware," he said.

Kong stressed that the explanation was unsatisfactory



Handout photo shows Kong discussing the case with Chan.

since the victim had categorically stated that she did not download any applications or click on any links.

"The only interaction she had was a WhatsApp call with the alleged scammer. This raises serious concerns about the evolving tactics of scammers, who may now be capable of exploiting vulnerabilities through seemingly harmless interactions such as calls or social media engagement," he said.

Kong added that the case highlighted a new wave of scams, where fraudsters had become increasingly technologically sophisticated, potentially gaining access to devices without victims knowingly downloading anything.

He said the Democratic Action Party (DAP) Stampin parliamentary service centre was assisting the victim in lodging an appeal with the Financial

Markets Ombudsman Services to challenge the bank's decision and to seek a fair resolution.

At the same time, he urged the public to exercise extreme caution when encountering advertisements on social media platforms such as Facebook.

"Even seemingly legitimate offers (such as food sales or services), may be entry points for scammers. Scammers are constantly evolving, and traditional assumptions about how scams work are no longer sufficient. What may appear to be a simple phone call could now be part of a larger phishing or device-compromise scheme," he said.

Kong also called upon financial institutions to step up in addressing these cases with greater accountability, especially where there was clear evidence that the victims played no part in the compromise of their own security.