

Friday, 29 January 2016

A SCAM is defined as a dishonest scheme or fraud. While there are many types of scams being committed in Malaysia, the top two currently are job scams and love scams.

In 2015, almost RM200mil were reported lost in scams. Technology and the Internet today are the catalysts in scamming people. The perpetrators carry out their scams online because it is difficult for the police to track them since they would certainly use a fake identity and fake profile picture.

Love scammers normally take advantage of people looking for romantic partners often via dating websites, apps or social media by pretending to be prospective companions. They play on emotional triggers to get the victims to provide money, gifts or personal details.

A love scam is not easy to detect since there are lots of people chatting online and finding their partners through online dating sites. However, there are a few signs to look out for.

The scammer is quick to share pictures of himself/herself, even within hours after starting the chat. But most of the pictures would be photos of models or friends of the scammer.

In Malaysia, the love scam is also known as African scam because the scammers are mainly from Nigeria, Uganda, Zimbabwe, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Ivory Coast. These scammers normally use fake profile pictures of good-looking Europeans.

Another sign of the love scammer is he or she will confess his/her love very quickly, sometimes after only a few days of chatting.

The scammer may buy parcels and send these to the unsuspecting victim and then request the person to mail these to a specified address. If the goods are stolen stuff, the victim can get into serious trouble.

While chatting, the scammer generally takes more time (than the victim) to respond. This is an indication that the scammer is simultaneously chatting with other victims.

The last warning sign of a love scammer is when he requests for money for medical expenses or other purposes.

A job scam occurs when a scammer poses as an employer or recruiter and offers attractive employment opportunities. But they ask the jobseeker for money in advance, purportedly to pay for work visas, travel expenses or background and/or credit checks that are required for the job.

Once the money is paid, the scammer disappears and the jobseeker is left with no job and out of pocket.

The scammers target jobseekers from overseas using the promise of huge salaries, work permits and paid travel to entice victims to part with their money. Sometimes the victims are very smart people who fall for the scam in a moment of weakness. Job scammers can put up a website mimicking the site of a real employer. Their websites are so similar to the legitimate site that even smart jobseekers will find it difficult to differentiate between a scam and a genuine job opening.

To avoid being victims of these scammers, jobseekers must reject any offer that requires them to pay a fee in advance. No legitimate company or recruiter will ask for money upfront. Job scammers typically do not have a company's website and contact details.

However, if they have a fake company's website then compare the contact number with the official company's website.

A recruiter or company that corresponds through a free email account such as Yahoo, Live, Hotmail or Gmail is very likely a scammer. Legitimate job-related emails will come from corporate email accounts.

Any job offer without an interview is most probably a scam. A reputable company will never offer a job without interviewing the prospective employee.

The ultimate sign of a job scam is when jobseekers receive offers for positions they did not apply for. The high salaries offered can cloud the victim's judgment.

The last sign of a job scam is the absence of a proper job description and where experience or qualifications are not needed.

There are unscrupulous people out there who are willing to do anything to get rich the easy way.

Some may be desperate to get a job or to be loved by somebody but caution must be

exercised to avoid falling into the hands of these fraudsters.

NUR IMANI
ABDULLAH
National Consumer Complaints Centre</p>