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Govt to raise awareness on cyber crime

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IN VIEW of the alarming rise in cyber crime in Malaysia, the government is taking serious steps to address the scourge.

As Communications and Multimedia Minister Gobind Singh Deo himself has said, cyber crime is posing a serious threat to Malaysians who are losing their hard-earned money — amounting to hundreds of thousands of ringgit — to scammers.

The Communications and Multimedia Ministry, through the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC), has had several discussions with Bukit Aman's Commercial Crime Investigation Department (CCID) to seek ways to combat the cyber crime menace, according to a press statement issued by Gobind on Oct 8.

They are now considering a proposal to establish a task force, comprising representatives from the MCMC, financial institutions and telecommunications companies, which will cooperate with CCID to expedite information-sharing and provide immediate feedback to the public if a scam is detected.

The Communications and Multimedia Ministry, through its various departments and agencies, will also spearhead a year-long campaign, starting this month and ending in December 2019, to increase public awareness on telecommunication fraud and educate the people on ways to protect themselves against falling



According to Gobind, cyber crime is posing a serious threat to Malaysians who are losing their hard-earned money — amounting to hundreds of thousands of ringgit — to scammers

victim to such crimes.

The departments and agencies involved in the campaign are the MCMC, *Malaysian National News Agency*, *Radio Televisyen Malaysia*, Information Department, National Film Development Corp Malaysia and the ministry's strategic communications division, which will all hold special programmes in support of the campaign.

The organisers will also collaborate with strategic partners like the police, private media outlets, other ministries, non-governmental organisations and community leaders to realise the campaign's objectives.

The police, for instance, will help in

terms of enforcement, while the private television and radio stations will help to disseminate the campaign's messages to the public.

The campaign is mainly targeted at retirees, working women and the middle-aged as these groups are said to be easily deceived by the fraudsters.

The campaign is also targeted at secondary school students and undergraduates.

Hoax Calls

The massive rise in the use of connected devices is rendering more Malaysians vulnerable to online scams and making it more challeng-

ing for the authorities to counter the threat.

In his Oct 8 press statement, Gobind revealed that from January to Oct 3 this year, 8,313 cyber crime cases were reported to CCID, with the victims fleeced of almost RM300 million.

Throughout 2017, 10,203 of such cases were reported, involving losses of about RM184.2 million.

Most of the scams reported are categorised as telecommunication fraud (including Macau scams), e-financial fraud, 419 scams (also known as love scams or African scams) and e-commerce fraud. Other types of cyber crime include online fraud, credit card fraud, identity theft and data hacking.

A Macau scammer typically operates by calling his intended victim and claiming that he is a police or Royal Malaysian Customs Department or Bank Negara Malaysia officer; or a court or bank representative, and informs victims that they have a "problem" with the authorities.

"Problems" that are commonly used as "bait" to put fear into the victims are an outstanding summons, tax issues or loan or credit card arrears. After getting the attention of the victims, the caller will ask for their personal and banking details, eventually tricking the victims into transferring money into the scammer's account.

From January to September this year, 3,816 telecommunication fraud cases involving losses of nearly RM163 million were reported, compared to 2,912 of such cases in 2017 involving about RM66 million.

Love Scams

Also known as "romance scams", the

love scam perpetrator scouts for victims on social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram.

Usually targeting single people, divorcees and widows in their golden years, the online Romeo gains the trust of his victims by sweet-talking them.

When the time is right, the suspect will trick the victim into believing that he has sent her a gift package, but it is stuck at the Customs and in order to retrieve it, she will have to pay them a certain sum of money. She will end up settling the payment, but realises she has been deceived when she finds out there is no gift waiting for her.

Up to early October this year, 1,398 love scam cases were reported with the victims swindled of about RM80 million. Last year, there were 1,774 of such cases involving about RM67 million.

Meanwhile, 513 cases of e-financial fraud valued at about RM32 million were reported throughout 2017. Up to Oct 3 this year, 286 of such cases were reported, but the losses incurred were higher at RM37 million.

The scammers' modus operandi is to offer a non-existent personal loan to their victim. But it has a catch — the victim will be told that they have to pay a certain amount first to cover the loan processing fee, guarantor fee, stamp duty and insurance before the loan is credited to them.

The e-commerce fraud value has also risen over the last two years. In 2017, 5,004 of such cases were reported, involving losses of about RM19.3 million, compared to 2,813 cases from January to early October this year with losses amounting to about RM19.5 million. — *Bernama*