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Headline: Police: Over RM390,000 lost in welfare aid assistance scam in 2018 Language: English
Publication/Portal: The Borneo Post (Sarawak) Section: Home
Date: 22 January 2019 Page: 4

Police: Over RM390,000 lost in welfare aid assistance scam in 2018

KUCHING: Police received 31 police reports throughout Sarawak last year from those who fell victim to individuals claiming to be able to assist in obtaining welfare aid.

Sarawak Commercial Crime Investigation Department (CCID) chief Supt Mustafa Kamal Gani Abdullah said losses from those cases – recorded between Jan 1 and Dec 31, 2018 – totalled RM390,425.

“For this year, from Jan 1 to Jan 20, we have received two such cases involving losses of RM23,180,” he said in a statement yesterday.

According to him, the modus operandi of such tricksters is to pose as either Welfare Department staff or middlemen, and offer to help victims

obtain supposedly government welfare aid.

He said those targeted are often from rural areas, comprising elderly folk, single mothers and low-income earners.

“They would offer to drive the victims to the welfare office or a bank where the aid is supposedly being handed out.

“While inside the car, victims are asked to remove and hand over whatever jewellery and cash they have on them, in order to convince the welfare office that they are poor and in need of the aid,” he said.

Mustafa Kamal said there were also cases where the tricksters would ask victims to empty their bank account

or Amanah Saham Bumiputera (ASB) account, and to hand over the money to them for supposed safe-keeping, so that any check by the welfare office would show the victim had no savings.

“In every case, regardless of which tactic is used, the victim would be brought to the welfare office or bank and told to go inside while the rest waited in the car. Once the victim steps out of the car, the suspects would speed off.”

He urged the public, especially those from the targeted group, to always be wary of attempts to deceive them through such means, and to never surrender their valuables to strangers for supposed safe-keeping.