



Women are also made use of as mule bank account holders

KUALA LUMPUR: Mule bank account holders have also not been spared by love scam syndicates.

Investigations led by Bukit Aman have detected the syndicates are luring local women and getting intimate with them in order to gain access to local bank accounts for their operations.

They use these women to open up bank accounts which will in turn be used to channel money the syndicates get from scamming victims online.

The Star recently spoke to then Federal Commercial Crime Investigation Department director (CCID) Datuk Mazlan Mansor who said this year, 303 people had been arrested, including 154 mule account holders.

The remaining 149 arrested were foreign nationals who had come in under the guise of furthering their studies.

"One such case that came to our attention involves a Nigerian who had intimate relations with a local girl and even had a child with her.

"He got the woman to pose as a courier worker in his scam and when we arrested them, all the evidence was linked to the local woman as even the bank account where the money went was in her name," he said, adding that these syndicate operators know just how to sweet-talk their victims into doing things for them.

He also said that they have come across cases where the mule account holder is completely unaware that the account has been used for scams.

"They fall in love with the scammer and they are asked to hand over their bank account information, which they do so willingly out of love.

"They unwittingly hand over all the details, including the eBanking login information," he said, adding that some of the mule account holders have also been blackmailed to hand over their account details.

Mazlan also added that these scammers will go to any length to get what they want.

They get into relationships with the mule account holders, take nude pictures of them and then use the photos against them.

Mazlan, who is now Deputy Inspector-General of Police, said last year they arrested a total of 613 foreigners and 573 locals, while in 2017 they arrested 619 locals and 795 foreigners.

"Based on the last two years, the numbers are showing a downward trend but that being said, we need to do more to ensure that the victims, including potential mule account holders, do not fall for these scams," he said.

Mazlan added that people need to be less trusting, especially when finding love online and dealing with sweet talkers.

If it is too good to be true, it often is a scam.

"We can easily cripple these syndicates if they do not have access to mule accounts.

"Where are they (the scammers) going to funnel their illicit gains if they do not have the means to do so?" Mazlan said.