

Tackling online scams

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Govt to amend law to allow authorities to freeze accounts

SCAMMERS and account mules beware! An amendment to the law that will allow authorities to freeze the bank accounts of scammers and punish “account mules” who allow their bank accounts to be used by these scammers has been proposed.

Deputy Home Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ismail Mohamed Said told the Dewan the laws will be amended to tackle online scams which have resulted in Malaysians losing over RM350mil in just six months this year.

“We need to amend Section 116B of the Criminal Procedure Code (CPC) to allow the investigating officer to freeze the bank accounts of those suspected of being involved in online scams.

“This includes Section 424 of the Penal Code to punish account mules who allow scammers to use their bank accounts,” he said when answering a question raised by Datuk Seri Dr Dzulkefly Ahmad (PH-Kuala Lumpur) in the Dewan Rakyat on Thursday.

Dzulkefly asked if steps were being taken to address rampant online scams, including data breaches resulting in such crimes.

Section 116B of the CPC relates to the powers of a police investigating officer to gain access to computerised data, whether stored on a computer or otherwise.

Section 424 of the Penal Code relates to an individual dishonestly or fraudulently assisting in the release of any demand or claim.

Earlier, Datuk Seri Azizah Mohd Dun (PN-Beaufort) lamented that Malaysians lost some RM5.2bil between 2020 and May this year to scammers who have now resorted to using various online platforms to dupe victims.

Ismail had earlier informed the House that a total of RM362.6mil was lost to online scammers between January and June this year.

He said the cases led to 10,468 investiga-



Taking the floor: Ismail speaking at the Dewan Rakyat in Parliament Building, Kuala Lumpur. — Bernama

tions resulting in 5,169 scammers being charged.

He also said that there were 506 cases between January and June this year linked to unlicensed money lenders or Ah Long involving RM4.28mil.

He said that 744 arrests were made, which resulted in 241 suspects being charged.

Meanwhile, Ismail acknowledged difficulties in investigating online scams, which are transboundary crimes committed abroad but whose victims are in Malaysia.

He said that cooperation with police from

Asean and Interpol is crucial in dealing with transboundary scams.

He cited several examples where Malaysian police worked closely with their counterparts in Singapore, South Korea and Taiwan to crack down on online scammers.

He said there were 255 cases with losses amounting to RM4.9mil last year involving scammers operating call centres in Kuala Lumpur, Johor and Singapore.

He said cooperation with police in Singapore led to the arrest of 50 suspects here and seven others in Singapore.