

More than 260 alleged scammers, money mules under probe

They purportedly cheated victims of over \$3m in loan, e-commerce and Internet love scams

Ang Qing

More than 260 people are being investigated for being alleged scammers or money mules following a two-week enforcement operation by the police, who said the victims purportedly lost over \$3 million.

Those under investigation comprise 177 males and 91 females, aged between 15 and 73.

The police said in a statement yesterday that the suspects are believed to be involved in 542 cases, comprising largely of loan, e-commerce and Internet love scams.

The police said the islandwide operation was conducted between Oct 24 and Friday by officers from the Commercial Affairs Department and the seven police land divisions.

Anyone convicted of cheating under Section 420 of the Penal Code can be jailed for up to 10 years and fined.

Those convicted of money laundering under the Corruption, Drug Trafficking and Other Serious Crimes (Confiscation of Benefits) Act can be imprisoned for up to 10 years and fined up to \$500,000.

E-commerce and loan scams were among the four most common types of scams in the first six months of this year, said the police in August.

From January to June, 2,089 cases involving e-commerce scams were reported, up from 1,202 cases in the first half of last year.

For the same period, 1,014 cases of loan scams were reported, up from 650 last year.

The police have reminded the public that they can avoid being an accomplice to crimes by always rejecting requests to use their bank account or mobile numbers. Otherwise, they will be held accountable if these are linked to illegal transactions.

For more information on scams, members of the public can visit www.scamalert.sg or call the anti-scam hotline on 1800-722-6688.

Anyone with information on such cases can call the police hotline on 1800-255-0000 or submit information online at www.police.gov.sg/whistle.

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Driven to help seniors access medical care



Transport Minister Ong Ye Kung driving a wheelchair-enabled bus used by the Blossom Seeds charity, accompanied by an employee. Mr Ong, who was the guest of honour at Blossom's flag day fund-raising event yesterday, was giving a simba lift from her home to the hospital for a medical appointment.

The vehicle is part of the charity's Medical Escort and Transport (MET) service aimed at helping low-income elderly people in need get to their medical appointments.

Blossom's annual event was held online for the first time owing to Covid-19 restrictions. It hopes to raise \$600,000 to continue operating the MET service, which is run in partnership with the Health Ministry's Agency for Integrated Health Services and caregivers. PHOTO: BLOSSOM SEEDS

A member of **NCSS** National Council of Social Service

Gateway to a Great Life This feature is the last of a four-part series by Great Eastern

A recent online straw poll of 54 young adults, aged 24 to 35, found that while Singaporeans are especially concerned about job security and career progression, they want meaningful careers. More than 80 per cent of respondents said workplace flexibility is a top priority, in the poll by SPH Content Studio.

Independence was a close second with over 70 per cent preferring to manage their own projects, without having to depend on others to get work done. About half value networking and growth opportunities, while just over a quarter want lifelong employment.

What the young want in a career:

Flexibility & purpose

By JEREMY THESEIRA

When Ms Ong Pei Yi was 26, she scored her dream job. A flight attendant with Singapore Airlines (SIA).

Ms Ong shares that her start with the national carrier helped her to fulfil her childhood dream of becoming a "Singapore Girl" and set her curiosity in the service sector. But her dream was short-lived. While rewarding, the job required her to travel regularly, for an average of 20 days a month, limiting the amount of time she could spend with her parents.

"My mum is getting on in years and I wanted very much to be in Singapore more often so that I could be around her," says the 29-year-old, who lives with her mother and father, both 67, in a four-room Housing Board flat in Yishun.

In 2004, her father suffered a stroke that affected his ability to walk. With her father unable to work, the family feared that they would not be able to pay for his living expenses after he was discharged from the hospital.

A five-figure insurance payout from the Dependents' Protection Scheme (DPS) — a term-life insurance scheme that automatically covers Singaporeans and permanent residents upon their first contribution to the Central Provident Fund — helped to defray these costs.

It was a great weight off her family's shoulders. Ms Ong recounts. "Since then, I have always appreciated the importance of insurance and how it could really help a family in difficult times."

Wishing to share the importance of insurance with others, she left SIA after 17 months to join Great Eastern as a financial representative in October last year.

The career switch was initially challenging, she admits, but the customer service skills developed from her time with SIA proved useful.



Financial representatives Ong Pei Yi (above) and Syafiq Shah (top) at the Great Eastern VOLTAGE centre, which opened its doors last December.

PHOTOS: GREAT EASTERN

"When it comes to reaching out to prospective clients, I am able to communicate easily with them."

Just a year into the job, Ms Ong is already finding her new career path rewarding.

Like most of the young polled, she appreciates the flexibility and independence. "My hours are really flexible and I get full autonomy to plan my time and schedule around my family commitments."

"I'm glad to be able to introduce and offer financial products to my clients that could benefit their lives meaningfully."

A day in the life

Great Eastern financial representative Syafiq Shah, 26, shares what he's gained from a career in financial planning.

Before Mr Shah graduated from the University of Wellington with a degree in commerce (finance), he underwent a four-month internship in retail operations at a bank.

"The typical corporate office environment" left much to be desired, and led to him choosing a career in financial planning instead.

"What I want out of my career is to be able to work as hard as I can and achieve work-life balance at the same time."

"I love the fact that I am able to make my own schedule for the day. With this job, I always feel positive and happy when waking up in the morning for work."

The job satisfaction has led to success. Within just four months of being a financial representative, he received the Million Dollar Round Table (MDRT) Aspirant Award.

The MDRT is a global trade association that recognises top-performing financial services professionals around the world.

Growth opportunities

Mr Shah shares he has seen families and relationships sour due to money issues and a lack of planning.

With this experience, he hopes to help people insure themselves against unforeseen events and accidents — especially amid the uncertainties from the Covid-19 pandemic.

"I want to reach out to people and make an impact on their lives by educating and empowering them with financial planning, so that they can proactively take steps to adequately protect their financial well-being throughout their lives."

Lifelong learning

It has only been a year since Mr Shah became a financial representative, but he already sees himself staying put for the long haul.

He says that regular training courses offered to financial representatives to update their skills make him feel more secure and assured about his future in the industry.

"The best part of the job for me is being part of my clients' key life stages, and the opportunity for lifelong learning encourage me to push myself and thank differently all the time."

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Insurance is a meaningful career to pursue and grow in, to support people's protection needs with professional advice and assistance throughout their different life stages.

— Patrick Peck, managing director, **Great Eastern, Financial Advisory and Bancassurance, Great Eastern**



Find out more about a rewarding career at Great Eastern.

A career with purpose

Keen on becoming a financial representative? Great Eastern is actively hiring and training job seekers looking to pursue a career in the insurance industry.

"We are always on the lookout for those who seek a career in this space. If you have the aptitude, heart, attitude and the right qualifications, we have the programmes to support your growth and success," says Mr Patrick Peck, managing director, Regional Agency, Financial Advisory and Bancassurance, Great Eastern, who has spent about 20 years in the industry. Some key initiatives include:

● **VOLTAGE** Singapore's first-ever insurance career discovery centre launched by Great Eastern, featuring experiential discovery showcases to help keen individuals understand more about a career in financial planning.

● **Centre for Excellence** Great Eastern's in-house training academy for financial representatives, with structured and segmented training programmes conducted by professionals trainers for continuous learning and development. They cover technical product knowledge, sales, soft skills and digital tools.

● **Rigorous and Comprehensive Training Programme** Great Eastern has training modules for its financial representatives at every stage of their career path, covering topics that range from prospecting to laws and regulations, and are aligned to the Institute of Banking and Finance (IBF) competency standards.

● **Great Digital Advantage** Great Eastern's platform to digitally empower its financial representatives offers interactive life storyboards and planning tools that help customers map their insurance needs to every stage of their life.