

PRESS RELEASE

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BOGUS PHONE SALES – "BUY 3 GET 1 FREE"

The Fiji Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU) would like to warn and advise members of the public to exercise extreme caution when responding to advertisements through the print media, unsolicited emails and social media on cheap mobile phone and other electronic devices that make promises such as "buy 3 get 1 free".

The Director of FIU, Mr Razim Buksh said that the FIU has established that the "buy 3 get 1 free" advertisement in the local print media on 30 January 2021 is bogus and a scam.

The advertisement claimed to offer a "buy 3 get 1 free" deal on brand new Apple iPhone 12 Pro Max, Playstation 5, other mobile phones and laptops valued from US\$700 to US\$1,300. Interested customers were to contact the following emails: onezero1992firm@salesperson.net or onezero1992firm@gmail.com.

Mr Buksh said that criminals trick victims into sending money for "too good to be true" deals. If something is too good to be true then it is certainly not true, especially when you are asked to send money. There are many ways criminals will get money from you, they commonly use online platforms and social media and offer fake job and work from home opportunities, bogus lottery prize, inheritance, investment, cash, loan, even online romance. Please stay away from responding to such emails, social media posts and advertisements, do not be fooled and do not become a victim.

Mr Buksh said that the FIU was able to establish that when contacted by prospective buyers from Fiji, the criminals would respond immediately by providing an order form which the prospective buyer will fill with details of their intended purchase. Upon replying to their initial email, the criminals would provide the total price for the order in FJD using fake invoice of legitimate foreign business.

The FIU has taken other preventative measures and issued an Alert & Instruction Notice to all commercial banks and international money transfer service providers to refrain from processing any payment to the criminal beneficiaries related to this scam.

Mr Buksh urged members of the public to remain vigilant and be very wary of such bogus deals, fake social media posts, deceptive online offers and unsolicited email correspondences.

Members of the public are requested to take the following steps when responding to such offers through emails, social media or print media:

- 1. Be sceptical about "too good to be true" deals;
- 2. Verify that the advertisement is from a legitimate mobile phone company, supplier or source:
- 3. Do online searches to verify the details of the deal;
- 4. Ask for basic information about the supplier such as the physical address or business

location, phone number, invoice, TIN number, etc.;

- 5. Consider how you will make the payment. Always insist on sending the money into a bank account.
- 6. Also ensure that you send money in the name of the company and not the individual purporting to represent the company; and
- 7. If you are unsure or have any suspicion or doubt about the legitimacy of the deal, it is strongly advised that you should immediately stop all communication with the parties and not proceed any further.

These types of scams and fraud are unfortunately on the rise. There are many types of scams out there. Online transactions and the internet makes our life easier, however, we must take necessary precautions to keep ourselves and our hard-earned money safe.

Please visit our website for more information: link.

A similar scam was reported in 2016 and a press release was issued on 3 June 2016: link.

Members of the public may also report any fraudulent or suspicious transactions to the FIU on telephone number 322 3333 or email: <u>info@fijifiu.gov.fi</u>

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Our Vision: Protecting Fiji from Money Laundering