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Two money mules in credit-for-sex syndicate jailed 12 months and 10 months respectively



Deliveryman Eric Lin Weishen (above) pleaded guilty to three charges and was given 12 months' jail, while storekeeper Elson Lim Yunjun got 10 months after pleading guilty to a single charge.
ST PHOTO: WONG KWAI CHOW

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SINGAPORE - Two men who served as money mules in a credit-for-sex syndicate were jailed on Monday (Oct 9) for money laundering.

Deliveryman Eric Lin Weishen, 34, pleaded guilty to three charges and was given 12 months' jail. His charges occurred between April and May 2017.

Storekeeper Elson Lim Yunjun, 26, got 10 months after pleading guilty to a single charge of facilitating one Ah Jiu to keep the benefits of criminal conduct by allowing his bank account to be used to receive funds and converting most of the money into online payment platform Alipay's credits between March 31 and April 10, 2017.

Credit-for-sex scams typically involve cheats posing as attractive women through social media platforms such as WeChat. These cheats then lure men into buying online shopping credits or gift cards at AXS machines in exchange for a date or sexual service.

Those who fall for the scam would then be instructed to send images of their purchase receipts to designated e-mail accounts, through which the syndicate would make its claims. In some instances, other members of the ring may contact the respondents to ask for more payments.

Victims usually realise they have been conned when they end up making multiple payments without being able to meet the women they befriended online.

Deputy Public Prosecutor Thiam Jia Min said that some time towards the end of April 2017, Lin came to know one woman known as Xiao Xi online, and she offered sexual services.

Subsequently, he decided to engage her sexual services and arranged to meet her at Bedok Reservoir on April 20.

But she was nowhere in sight that day. He received her call and was told to buy an iTunes gift card worth \$100 as pre-payment for her services. Lin did as he was told.

Shortly after, a man, who identified himself as Ah Jiu, called, claiming to be the person in charge of prostitutes, including Xiao Xi.

Ah Jiu told Lin that he had to pay an extra \$600 to ensure Xiao Xi's safety. Eventually, Ah Jiu agreed to collect just \$100 from Lin, who was told to buy Alipay credits worth \$105. Lin complied.

But after waiting four to six hours, he still did not get to meet Xiao Xi and suspected that he had been scammed, said DPP Thiam.

Ah Jiu then called and said they had problems on their end managing the prostitutes. He said Lin would get back his pre-payments if he agreed to help Ah Jiu collect money using his bank account and to convert the money into Alipay credits that was to be sent to a particular e-mail address provided.

Further, Ah Jiu reassured Lin that he would be able to continue hiring the prostitutes. For every amount received, Lin would also get to keep between \$20 and \$40.

Between April 21 and May 15, 2017, Lin received a total of \$18,200 in his bank account via 18 transfers. He converted \$16,873 of the sum into Alipay credits for Ah Jiu on 38 occasions. The Alipay credits were bought for \$50 to about \$630.

Lin decided to help as he wanted to recoup his loss of \$205 and to continue visiting prostitutes under Ah Jiu's supervision, the court heard.

Police managed to trace \$17,600 to seven local victims who had transferred funds into Lin's bank account. Six of them had made the transfers as pre-payments for sexual services which they never got.

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In Lim's case, \$19,100 of the \$36,400 transferred into his bank account were traced to three men, who had similarly been conned into buying Alipay credits and iTunes gift cards as pre-payment for sexual services which they never received.

The maximum penalty for the offence is a \$500,000 fine and 10 years' jail.

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