

CRIME ADVISORY: RENTAL SCAM

Police have recently solved a series case of syndicated rental scam leading to the arrest of three subjects.

2 These criminals would deploy high-pressure techniques in rushing their victim into renting the apartment or room and to give advance rental payments, especially when the demands are not in accordance with market norms.

Crime Prevention Measures

3 Members of public are advised to be aware of these scams and adopt the following measures to prevent falling prey:

- Engage reputable agents for your housing needs;
- Reduce your risk of loss by seeking agreement to pay your rent over a number of periodic payments rather than a large sum for a year or more;
- Be wary of overly low rents being offered;
- Question the landlord on reasons why he/she is leasing the unit;
- Insist on visiting the unit. Be wary if the timings are scheduled at odd hours;
- Ascertain whether you will be renting the premises from the house owner directly or from the chief-tenant. In the latter case, you are a sub-tenant;
- Conduct background checks by enquiring with the neighbours or current tenants to ascertain that the people whom you are dealing with are legitimate;
- Insist to have the owner apply for approval to sublet online at the HDB portal (www.hdb.gov.sg) when the agreement is signed and deposit is paid in compliance with the regulation;
- Avoid giving cash payment. Leverage on electronic/online transfer or issue a cheque so that a record can be traced; and
- When renting the entire flat, potential tenant should request to see the approval from HDB from the owner.

4 In addition, always protect yourself with a written tenancy agreement. This helps to avoid future conflicts between both parties. A written tenancy agreement is a document that sets down the terms and rules between the houseowner/chief-tenant and tenant. This is a legal contract which will be followed while the tenant lives in the rental unit. This agreement can contain any provision that each party agrees to as long as the particular provision is legal.

5 Those who encounter such rental scams should report the matter to the Police at the nearest Neighbourhood Police Centre. You may also call the **Police hotline** at **1800 – 255 0000** or **'999'** if urgent Police assistance is required.