

RM620 loan balloons to RM200,000

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Gate torched over compound interests in debt scam

GEORGE TOWN: Suspected loan sharks poured petrol and set ablaze a woman's gate, all because of a supposed RM620 loan with RM200,000 in compound interests.

Cheoh Phaik Gaik, 62, was rudely awakened by the smell of petrol outside her house in Abu Siti Lane here at 1am on Saturday.

"I woke my husband up and went to our porch where I saw a roll of burnt paper.

"I tried to open the gate but it was chained with a padlock.

"There was a big paper note saying 'Now you want cheat my company money ah?'

"Now you never contact me I will keep burn it'.

"Only later did I realise my gate was torched by suspected loan sharks who were after my son in

Singapore," she said during a press conference at her house arranged by Penang Front Party (PFP) vice-president Ong Seong Lu yesterday.

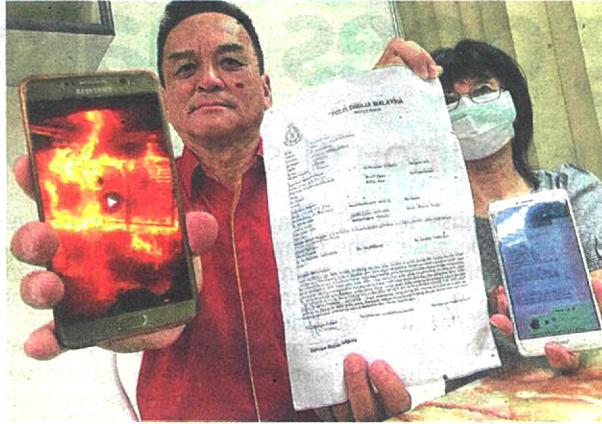
A video of her gate being set ablaze was sent to Cheoh's daughter by the suspected loan sharks as a warning, where one of the two men could be heard saying in Tamil "burn it first".

Cheoh said her son was offered a loan of S\$200 (RM620) through an Internet scam some time ago.

"Although he didn't want it, the money was transferred into his bank account.

"He returned the money immediately after sensing something was wrong, but the loan sharks began harassing him.

"They claimed that the loan has



Getting burned: Ong holding a phone with a footage of the burning gate in one hand and a police report in the other as Cheoh looks on behind him.

now ballooned to RM200,000.

"My son had already made a report on the scam in Singapore and they have stopped harassing

him, but they are now hounding us. They must have tracked my house through my son's MyKad," she said.

Cheoh said she did not suspect anything until two weeks ago when she and her husband found a long scratch on their car when they parked in Air Itam.

"I began receiving calls asking us for the money after the incident.

"We also do not know how they got my daughter's and my phone numbers," she added.

Cheoh said she had lodged a report at the George Town district police station and urged the police to investigate, adding that she feared for her life and her husband's.

Meanwhile, Ong urged people not to fall for money scams on the Internet as loan sharks would not hesitate to cause harm to people and property if the money was not repaid.

At least 13 robberies solved after five in 'Gang Steady' held

By LIEW JIA XIAN
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GEORGE TOWN: They would target landed property occupants living near the hills, with their favourite phrase "You steady, I steady, Kami cuma mahu wang saja" (We only want money).

For the past 10 months, the five Indonesian robbers known as 'Gang Steady' had been terrorising the neighbourhoods of Bukit Gambier, Jelutong and Balik Pulau.

Led by a 56-year-old mastermind from Batam, they would hide in the hills before breaking into the targeted houses in the wee hours.

Armed with machetes, knives and sickles, the masked Indonesian men would tie up their victims before robbing them of valuables and returning to the hills on foot.

Their luck ran out on Monday when three of them were picked up at Hentian Duta bus terminal in Kuala Lumpur at 2am.

Upon interrogation of the trio,

another two men hiding in the hills of Bukit Gambier were also nabbed on the same day.

Penang CID chief Senior Asst Comm Datuk Zainol Samah said police believe they have solved at least 13 robberies with this arrest.

Among the loot recovered worth around RM500,000 were 20 smartphones and tablets, branded clothes, bags, watches, sunglasses, jewellery, and foreign and local currencies.

"The suspects would warn their victims to keep calm and not to put

up a fight as they just wanted money.

"We located the suspects in an operation codenamed 'Ops Rantau Steady'. We identified three of them who boarded an express bus at the Sungai Nibong bus terminal to Larkin, Johor.

"The police then followed the bus until Hentian Duta bus terminal in Kuala Lumpur before making the arrest.

"With information from the nabbed suspects, a police team picked up another two suspects in the for-

est behind Universiti Sains Malaysia in Bukit Gambier," he said at state police headquarters here yesterday.

SAC Zainol said two of them were from Batam while the other three were from Riau, Indonesia. They are aged between 29 and 56 years old.

"Some of them are labourers and construction workers.

"They will be remanded until Nov 3 to aid investigations," he said, adding that the case was being investigated as armed robbery under Section 395/397 of the Penal Code.

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