

PRESS RELEASE

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BEWARE OF COVID-19 RELATED ONLINE SCAMS

The Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU) received a report of a product scam connected to COVID-19 whereby a local pharmaceutical company paid for an order it never received. This scam is relevant for the sale of coronavirus related health and sanitation products such as face masks, hand sanitisers and disinfectant wipes.

Director of the Financial Intelligence Unit, Mr Razim Buksh, said that a local pharmaceutical company had contacted a foreign individual and business that was marketing face masks on Facebook. The communication between the two parties later involved an email and WhatsApp correspondence whereby the local pharmaceutical company paid \$6,500 for an order using the banking details noted in the invoice sent by the supplier. Mr Buksh said that the local pharmaceutical company later received a fake confirmation from a freight company regarding the shipment of its order, however, the order has not been received to date.

Mr Buksh said that with the COVID-19 pandemic, there is an increasing reliance on the internet for information and services and therefore, it is crucial for local businesses and members of the public to remain vigilant about cyber security because online criminals are using this global crisis for their financial gain.

This week the Fiji Police Force posted a warning on Facebook about cyber criminals advertising services relating to COVID-19 on various websites.

The Fiji Pharmaceutical Society and Fiji Chamber of Commerce and Industry have been alerted and requested to raise awareness and warn its members and other relevant stakeholders of suppliers who market COVID-19 related health and sanitation products through email, social media and instant messaging applications such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, Twitter and Messenger.

Mr Buksh urges businesses and members of the public to exercise extreme caution when trading on social media, conduct enhanced due diligence checks when engaging new suppliers, consult their local bank to verify transaction details before transferring funds to the supplier's bank account, and consult the FIU to determine if a supplier is legitimate or not. Furthermore, businesses and members of the public are urged not to respond to any unsolicited email from suppliers of such products, not to click on any link provided, not to open files attached to unsolicited emails, and not to share bank account and credit card details to unsuspecting online criminals.

Razim Buksh
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