



Persatuan Pengguna Pulau Pinang Consumers Association of Penang

檳城消費人協會 பிளாங்கு பயனீட்டாளர் சங்கம்

10 Jalan Masjid Negeri, 11600 Pulau Pinang, Malaysia
Tel: 604-8299511 Fax: 604-8298109
email: consumerofpenang@gmail.com

Websites:
www.consumer.org.my

Press Statement

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Consumers be particularly wary when buying laptops or computers during the pandemic

With the emergence of online businesses and students having to study via online, there has been a spike in demand for laptops or computers. There is also a pressure to have these to compete under the current challenging situation. However, the Consumers Association of Penang (CAP) wants to caution people wanting to purchase such devices or equipment to be wary of (1) scams, (2) warranty, and (3) prices.

Try not to purchase through social media such as FaceBook or WhatsApp because it is not possible to know the reliability of the seller. It might be argued that there is a valid bank account where the payment is deposited into but the receiver (bank account holder) might be, what is known as, a 'money mule'. A money mule is a person paid for services with a small amount of money transferred. The mule may not even realise that his account had been used for illegal money transfer from the buyer to the scam operator. It is likely difficult to trace (or unable to trace) the scam operator who might be in another country.

People can also check if their bank account or others had been used in scams or other fraudulent activities at <http://ccid.rmp.gov.my/semakmule/>.

It would be advisable to acquire a second-hand or refurbished equipment from someone you know and preferably known to be reliable. The reason is that, if there is anything wrong, you can easily find the person as compared to one who lives far away. There have been cases of people buying electronic items from other states and found that the equipment is defective.

Is there any warranty left when you purchase the device? Some manufacturers allow you to check the warranty online basing on the serial number of the device. If you purchase from someone you know and lives nearby, it is possible to test it out before concluding the purchase.

There was a case where a lady purchased a 'deal of a lifetime' iPhone. She paid and she received a parcel. She opened it up to find a rusty lock (without any key) inside and her calls were blocked when she attempted to contact the seller.

If it is a new product that you are buying, shop around for the specifications and the price. Don't rush into the purchase. Seek the advice of friends who are knowledgeable in the field if needed because you have to buy something suitable for your purpose.

The device/equipment, for most business transactions such as online payments and online education, need internet connection. Again, you have to determine which internet service is best for you because the connectivity of some internet lines may not be good in your area. Ask your neighbours perhaps and gauge their feedback which may guide you in your decision.

As for the government, online education is unavoidable during the pandemic, but it has to consider those from B40 families, most of whom cannot afford to own a laptop which also needs internet connection for online education. These are the people who will be left behind in their studies.

We reiterate our call for consumers to be wary when buying laptops or computers (old, refurbished, or new) because they are targets of scammers or opportunists who prey on people making hasty decision. We also call upon the Ministry of Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs (KPDNHEP) to continue their monitoring of the selling of such computer equipment.

Mohideen Abdul Kader
President
Consumers Association Of Penang