

Spotting an Investment Scam

World Investor Week (WIW) is a week-long global campaign promoted by the International Organization of Securities Commissions (IOSCO) to raise awareness of the importance of investor education and protection and to highlight initiatives by securities regulators in these areas. This year, WIW focuses on the themes of “Investor Resilience, Digital Deception and Scam Alert”.

In conjunction with WIW, Brunei Darussalam Central Bank (BDCB) is sharing practical guidance to help the public make informed investment decisions, recognise potential warning signs and better protect their money. As part of this effort, this article looks at investment scams and the key checks you should make before committing your money.

Spot the signs of an investment scam

Imagine receiving a message through social media or a WhatsApp group promoting an investment with unusually high returns. The person sharing it says they have already made money through the scheme and offers to guide you through the investment process. Then, they tell you the opportunity will close soon.

That sense of urgency is a reason to slow down.

Investment scams can be disguised as exclusive opportunities and may even use the name or logo of a real institution to appear convincing. Some scammers take time to build trust with potential victims before introducing an investment opportunity. They may then direct you to an app or website that appears to show your investment earning profits. However, when you try to withdraw your money and “profits”, they may ask you to pay additional fees or make further payments before releasing the funds.

Five checks before you invest

Before subscribing to any investment offers, make these checks:

1. **Check the financial services provider**

Look up the company and relevant activity on the [BDCB List of Licensees](#). Contact the provider via their official channels rather than those given by the person promoting the investment.

You may also check the [BDCB Alert List](#) for entities to be avoided.

Both lists can be found on BDCB’s website at www.bdcg.gov.bn.

2. **Question the potential return or profit**

Promises of high returns or profits with little or no risk are a major warning sign. Always ask and understand how the investment generates returns, what risks are involved, and what fees or withdrawal conditions apply.

3. **Check where your money is going**

Be cautious if you are instructed to transfer money to a personal account or to an account that does not match the provider you have verified. You could be sending your money directly to a scammer instead of a legitimate investment.

4. **Protect your banking details**

Never share your PIN, password or authentication code with anyone. Do not give anyone access to your phone or computer to “assist” you with an investment. This could give scammers access to your accounts and allow them to make unauthorised transactions or steal your money.

5. **Seek advice from certified and licensed professionals**

If you need investment advice, consult professionals licensed by BDCB and affiliated with the Brunei Darussalam Capital Markets Association (BCMA). They can help you clarify your financial goals, assess your risk tolerance, and develop a tailored investment strategy that aligns with your long-term objectives.

Scammed? Act fast.

If you suspect that you have been scammed, act quickly:

1. **Stop any further transfers**

Do not send any more money, even if you are told that another payment is needed to withdraw or recover your funds.

2. **Contact your bank and the Anti-Scam Helpline**

Immediately inform your bank and contact the Anti-Scam Helpline at 16993.

3. **Report it to the police**

Lodge a report with the Royal Brunei Police Force (RBPF) as soon as possible. Keep any evidence related to the scam and do not delete your conversations or transaction records. Provide relevant information such as messages with the suspected scammer, payment or transaction records, bank account details, phone numbers, social media accounts and related links. This information may help the authorities investigate the scam and trace those involved.

When it comes to investing, don't let pressure or promises rush your decision. Always pause, check and verify before you invest.