Four arrested over impersonating first daughter

Investigations were initiated after Ms Natasha Karugire lodged a formal complaint at CID headquarters, alerting police of the existence of fraudulent social media accounts operating in her name.

BY BENSON TUMUSIIME

Security agencies have arrested four suspected cyber fraudsters accused of impersonating first daughter, Ms Natasha Karugire, on social media platforms to defraud unsuspecting members of the public.

The suspects were picked up during a joint intelligence-led operation involving the Joint Anti-Terrorism Task Force (JATT), the Criminal Investigations Directorate (CID) and Crime Intelligence, targeting organised cybercrime syndicates exploiting digital platforms.

Police said the suspects created fake TikTok and WhatsApp accounts bearing Ms Karugire's name and image, through which they solicited money from victims under the guise of offering financial assistance and other favours.

During the operation, detectives tracked the syndicate by analysing IP addresses, digital infrastructure, domains and linked social media profiles, leading to the arrest of four suspects in Iganga District.

RECOVERED

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Addressing journalists on Monday, the police spokesperson, Mr Rusoke Kituuma, said: "The four suspects were arrested for impersonating Natasha Karugire, the daughter of President Museveni, on social media platforms. They will soon be arraigned in court to answer charges of cyber fraud and impersonation under the Computer Misuse Act and the Penal Code."

He added that investigations were initiated after Ms Karugire lodged a formal complaint at CID headquarters, alerting police of the existence of fraudulent accounts operating in her name.

93.5% ▲

In 2024, cybercrime cases increased by 93.5% to 474.

Preliminary findings indicate that the suspects targeted individuals seeking financial help, demanding money for so-called registration and processing fees.

Police have urged the public to exercise caution when engaging with services advertised on social media, particularly applications related to visas, passports and national identity documents.

"Never pay registration or processing fees through social media. It is a loose platform and very easy for fraudsters to trap unsuspecting Ugandans. Always verify information before acting on it," Mr Kituuma cautioned.

Uganda has recorded a steady rise in cyber-related crimes in recent years. According to the Police Annual Crime Report 2024, a total of 474 cybercrime cases were reported in 2024, up from 245 cases in 2023, representing a 93.5 percent increase.

The report further shows that cybercrime resulted in financial losses amounting to Shs72 billion in 2024, of which only Shs420 million was recovered.

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