

## 84-year-old woman caught in phone scam

SOFIA BULGARIA: An 84-year-old Bulgarian woman was nabbed by police for being part of a criminal gang that ripped off other distressed elderly people of their savings, local authorities said on Tuesday (15 January).

The woman served as a go-between and collected money for the crooks, who telephoned the victims and tricked them into believing that they were helping a relative in distress, Kyustendil police spokeswoman Katya Tabachka said.

According to police, since December the octogenarian had collected 3,400 leva (US\$2,300) from three elderly victims of the scam.

Her latest hit was on Sunday(13 January), when she got 800 leva from an older woman who was led to believe the money would help her grandson escape prosecution after injuring a child in a car crash, Tabachka said.

The elderly victim lodged a police complaint and the suspect was caught red-handed just hours later, while receiving 2,000 leva from a man who had also warned police in advance.

Police are currently searching for four other people who were part of the same scam, Tabachka said.

Phone scams, which feed on rampant corruption in Bulgaria, increased by 30% in 2012 compared with a year earlier, police data showed recently.

A total 70 criminals in six groups were detained by police last year.

Source: *AFP* via I-Net Bridge