

There is nothing like a free lunch: not even on the Internet! Muryanja Ssenyonga

It sounds very appealing, money on the cards, without earning it, as it were. The request is simple: Convey your account number to the address below and tens of millions, not of Rupiah but dollars will start rolling in. Money is there for the taking merely awaiting transfer. The transaction has to be crunched up, borrowing the crunching up of numbers deftly conducted by executives of large corporations to boost company values. This shouldn't bother you, you are calmed, as the entire process has been arranged to clock work precision. You just have to follow the direction and guidance given to you, and wow! You are a millionaire! This makes sitting in that rotating chair, which has become the attraction of many in Tantowi Yahya's 'Who want to become a milliodare program more of a lion's den than a preparation for lift off to lofty ecstasy, revelry, and never ending good life! It is all about the cyberspace.

While software programming wizards in India's Bangalore and California's Silicon Valley, are taxing their minds to near delirium in their search for ways to solve domestic, industrial, aerospace, military, and maritime nagging problems using their programming masterly, others have other ideas. Thinking of such issues in an immense distraction for many of these folks. For them advantages offered by internet such as instant information dissemination to as many recipients as the sender wants, can be of use to make as much money as possible in as fast a manner, and as canny as nobody before you. Those members of the internet community who happen to use free emails services are possibly the main targets, since subscribers to ISPs may shielded by proxies and firewalls, keeping these money-hungry 'wizards' may be too much of an undertaking. Proof of such vulnerability came to the fore some few days when an employee working in one private firm around here, in Yogyakarta, via the subscribed email service. With his face all smiles, delicately holding an invitation from some big guy in a foreign country summoning him to enter a deal worth US\$ 26.5. This guy was so fascinated by the venture which apparently came like a jolt from the blue, that he never countenanced broaching the idea to even his colleagues, for long sharing good and bad days together, simply to reduce the possibility of letting the cat out of the bag! Poor fellow! Perusing through the invitation one got the impression of a lot of money involved US \$26.5, yet little was demanded of the guy to serve as his contribution to the deal. He only had to send his particulars to the address indicated, details of his account number, and country of residence. As the deal had to be settled in a matter of three days he had to contact the individual who sent the invitation via either telephone or facsimile as soon as he could possibly make it- numbers given. Possibly the hardest chore was the creation of transaction!

Discrepancies were everywhere even for the uninitiated. The guy is taking about millions of dollars but used free email service, possibly one would think more suitable for those of us who can barely lay hands on cents of dollars than those with millions of dollars rolling in. Besides, the regional code for telephone number for the telephone differed from that given for the facsimile, yet according to the writer of the invitation both were fixed line numbers and not cell phones. Possibly the millionaire did not even have ample cash to lay his hands on a 'dear' cell phone. The source of the money lying in vaults in some bank, was as dubious as other elements of the invitation. Some rich father forced to go for exile for political reasons, carrying with him huge cache of cash, which was put under lock and key in a bank. The father didn't have the chance to carry with him the family into exile. The father is dead. But details of the money and how to get it were sent to his family. Since the money is a lot, the only way to get it is through paying some large ticket transaction, which was to be concocted by the party receiving the invitation.

The scam seems so easy to detect by use of hindsight. Yet at the time one receives such a mouth-watering deal, indications are that the excitement of the moment may blind one to such seemingly crystal clear loopholes.

The moral here is that one should never expect to reap from where no sowing was made, Internet is no exception. Dotcoms which were run by internet wizards have gone into oblivion, for this very reason-thinking that internet could churn out of dollars to the owners without producing goods and services on demand by real consumers. Deriving an earned income by the uninitiated in this business is of course any body's guess.

It is a pity that on close scrutiny what comes to light is that most such bogus deals come from developing countries, where survival does not require millions of even local currency but far much less. Yet many are languishing. And one is talking about tens of millions of dollars! These guys are really audacious, and may be foolhardy, too! Surely poverty in material doesn't translate into paucity in morality!

The most unfortunate part of the issue is that one may fail to answer some wake-up call for some deal, just because one fears getting his 'her fingers burnt! So next time you receive an invitation through your email service don't merely peruse through it, but make sure you spend some time to read between the lines.