

Singaporeans aid Vietnam tourist victim of phone scam

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Singaporeans outraged by an electronics shop that left a Vietnamese tourist in tears after a phone-sale scam have raised thousands of dollars to compensate him, a crowdfunding site showed Thursday.

Factory worker Pham Van Thoai, 28, on Monday forked out Sg\$950 (\$730) to buy a new iPhone 6 in the Sim Lim Square electronics mall, which has long been known to victimise tourists.

But employees of the "Mobile Air" store refused to allow him to leave with the phone unless he paid an additional Sg\$1,500 in "warranty fees". He was eventually given a partial refund of Sg\$400, with no phone in hand, after police intervention.

A video widely shared on social media showed Pham kneeling down and begging the shop owner and employees for his full cash payment while they laughed at him.

Singapore media reports said Pham earns the equivalent of \$160 a month in Vietnam and had saved up for months to buy the latest iPhone for his girlfriend.

A [crowdfunding](#) campaign launched on the Indiegogo portal to buy Pham an iPhone 6 reached \$11,000 by midday Thursday, with more than 1,400 donors.

"This is not OK, this is not right. We are NOT a nation of thieves and

cheats," wrote Singaporean technology entrepreneur Gabriel Kang, who initiated the campaign a day after the incident.

"While we cannot undo those traumatic and humiliating scenes he has had to endure, we can try to make things right. Let's give the man an iPhone 6!," Kang wrote on the campaign site.

Despite the huge amount collected on his behalf, Pham said he would only accept the amount he had to forfeit at the store.

"I will accept only \$550 donated by kind people. Nothing more. I'm grateful for all your kindness but I do not want to take more than what I've lost," he told the Chinese-language Lianhe Zaobao newspaper.

The incident has touched a raw nerve in wealthy, tech-savvy Singapore, which depends heavily on tourism revenues. The city-state of 5.5 million people attracted nearly 16 million tourists in 2013.

The six-storey Sim Lim Square mall has a bad reputation for a small number of rogue retailers who prey on unsuspecting tourists looking to purchase the latest gadgets before returning home.

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