

NEWS PAPER CUTTING ON MAC 2021
NEWS STRAIT TIMES

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FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE

AMBANK Q3 NET PROFIT FALLS 30.96pc

Group not proposing any final dividend for the year following its 1MDB settlement

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AMMB Holdings Bhd's (AmBank Group) net profit fell 30.96 per cent to RM263.83 million in the third quarter ended Dec 31, 2020, from RM382.15 million a year earlier.

AmBank Group said its revenue had fallen 11.81 per cent to RM2.09 billion from RM2.37 billion in the third quarter of 2019 due to lower interest on deposits from customers, deposits and placements from banks and other

financial institutions and recourse obligation on loans and financing sold to Cagamas Bhd.

For the nine months, the group's net profit shrank to RM866.315 million from RM1.09 billion last year due to higher impairment charges.

It posted a revenue of RM6.44 million, down 9.4 per cent from the same period in 2019.

Group chief executive officer Datuk Sulaiman Mohd Tahir said it would not propose any final dividend for the year ending March 31, 2021, following its global settlement with the government over the 1Malaysia Devel-

opment Bhd scandal.

AmBank Group had agreed to pay RM2.83 billion to settle all outstanding claims and actions in relation to its involvement in the scandal.

"While this will have a material impact on the group's fourth-quarter financial year 2021 earnings and consequently 2021 results, it is important to note that we have adequate capital buffers to absorb the global settlement without an immediate need to raise additional equity capital.

"However, as a consequence of the settlement, the group will not propose any final dividend for financial year 2021,"

said Sulaiman.

Elaborating on the results, AmBank Group said its net interest income (NII) of RM2.13 billion in the third quarter was three per cent higher than a year ago.

Excluding net modification loss, its NII increased 3.7 per cent, driven by 4.4 per cent loans growth year-to-date.

However, the group said net interest margin had contracted 8.0 basis points (bps) to 1.85 per cent year-on-year, from the impact of the cumulative 125 bps reduction in the Overnight Policy Rate during the year.

The group's gross impaired loans ratio remained at 1.73 per cent, with a loan loss coverage

ratio of 103.4 per cent.

"Gross loans and financing grew 4.4 per cent year-to-date to RM111.9 billion, driven by growth in retail banking and business banking.

"Mortgages grew RM2.6 billion to RM39.1 billion and loans to small and medium enterprise customers increased by RM1.4 billion to RM22.3 billion while wholesale banking loans fell by RM1.07 billion from lower corporate utilisation."

Group customer deposits grew 5.4 per cent year-to-date to RM119 billion, with current account and savings account (CASA) balances up 16.1 per cent (CASA mix higher at 28.1 per cent).



AMMB Holdings Bhd says its revenue had fallen 11.81 per cent to RM2.09 billion in the third quarter ended Dec 31, 2020 from RM2.37 billion in the same period in 2019. FILE PIC

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MoF in settlement talks with KPMG in relation to 1MDB scandal

By INTAN FARHANA ZAINUL
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PETALING JAYA: The Finance Ministry (MoF) is negotiating a settlement with audit firm KPMG in relation to the 1Malaysia Development Bhd (1MDB), according to sources.

"The government has started negotiations on the settlement with KPMG. The process is ongoing," said a source.

This came after the MoF announced that it has struck a settlement with another audit firm, Deloitte PLT, which has agreed to pay US\$80mil (RM324mil) to the government.

KPMG was involved with 1MDB after Ernst & Young (EY) was terminated as the auditor of 1MDB's accounts in 2010. KPMG took over in September 2010 and signed off on 1MDB's financial year 2010 (FY10), FY11 and FY12 accounts.

However, the audit firm refused to sign off on the accounts for FY13 and it was replaced by Deloitte until 2016.

In a statement on Wednesday, the ministry said the settlement with Deloitte will resolve all legal claims related to their fiduciary duty on the auditing of accounts of 1MDB and SRC International Sdn Bhd from 2011 to 2014.

In addition, last week, the government announced a settlement of RM2.83bil with AMMB Holdings Bhd on all outstanding claims and actions in relation to the AmBank Group's involvement in the 1MDB scandal.

This was on top of the government's global settlement with Goldman Sachs including a cash payment of US\$2.5bil (RM10.6bil) and guarantee of full recovery value of at least US\$1.4bil (RM5.9bil) in assets traceable to proceeds diverted from three 1MDB-linked bonds which it had helped arrange.

The settlement with Goldman, Deloitte and AMMB came as the government tries to recover as much of the losses it suffered in the scandal linked to 1MDB.

In the same statement on Wednesday, Finance Minister Tengku Datuk Seri Zafrul Abdul Aziz said: "This marks another success in the Malaysian government's continuing recovery efforts against parties involved in 1MDB, SRC and its related entities."

"The government is determined to ensure that appropriate actions are taken against all individuals or entities involved, directly or indirectly, in the global 1MDB scheme."

The ministry said the RM324mil, which Deloitte has agreed to pay, was the "largest 1MDB-related settlement by an audit firm in South-East Asia."

"The successful out-of-court settlement with Deloitte will expedite the payment of monies, to fulfill 1MDB and SRC's outstanding obligations, which would otherwise be delayed by potentially protracted and costly court battles," MoF said.

In 2019, the Securities Commission fined Deloitte RM2.2mil for allegedly failing to report irregularities as the auditor of companies linked to 1MDB.

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Former Felcra manager pleads not guilty to CBT

SANDAKAN: A former Felcra manager pleaded not guilty at the Sessions Court here yesterday to six counts of criminal breach of trust (CBT) amounting to RM20,999.44 in 2018. Shahrul Nazim Mustapa, 39, was charged with committing the offences while working as the manager of Felcra Estet Pertama, between Aug 6 and Dec 31, 2018 at Felcra Bhd office here. For the first charge, he was accused of dishonestly releasing RM2,830.92 from the Felcra Estet Pertama's Work Management Fund through a cheque on Aug 6, 2018. For the second charge, he was accused of releasing RM1,978.04 from the same fund on Sept 6, 2018. For the third to sixth charges, he was alleged to have released money from the same fund, namely, RM2,642.20 on Oct 5, 2018; RM3,465.22 on Nov 7, 2018; RM4,461.26 on Dec 13, 2018 and RM5,621.80 on Dec 31, 2018. Judge Abu Bakar Manat set April 8 for case mention and allowed a bail of RM10,000 with RM5,000 to be deposited by a local surety. **Bernama**

Company director charged with investment fraud

KUALA LUMPUR: A company director was charged in the Sessions Court here yesterday on charges of cheating a lawyer in connection with an investment related to property development in Johor, in 2014. Sarwan Singh Kundan Singh, 52, pleaded not guilty after the charges were read before judge Kamarudin Kamsun. Sarwan is accused of cheating Aminah Faudzar, 56, of RM9 million by convincing her that the money would be used for mining, a restaurant business and the Medini Square development project in Johor Baru. The court allowed bail of RM75,000 in one surety, along with the condition that the accused must report to the police station once a month until the case is completed. May 4 was set for re-mention of the case. **Bernama**

Customs Dept foils foreign migrant smuggling attempt

JOHOR BARU: The Customs Department thwarted an attempt to smuggle out four foreign migrants near Pontian last Saturday. Johor Customs director Sazali Mohamad said the department's marine unit enforcement division stumbled upon a boat carrying a group of people comprising four foreigners aged between 24 and 46 during a patrol at 1.40pm. "It was found that the three men did not possess valid travel documents while the woman held a passport. They were then detained for further investigations." **Bernama**

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'SUPPORTED BY EVIDENCE'

Adam Rosly loses appeal to set aside conviction

PUTRAJAYA: The Court of Appeal upheld the conviction, six months' jail and RM30,000 fine on former Ampang Angkatan Muda Keadilan chief Datuk Adam Rosly Abdullah for giving false statements and fake documents to the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC).

A three-member bench, comprising Datuk Yaacob Md Sam, Datuk P. Ravinthan and Datuk Wira Ahmad Nasfy Yasin, dismissed Adam Rosly's appeal on Monday.

The court affirmed the Sessions Court's decision on April 26, 2018, which sentenced Adam Rosly to six months' jail and fined him RM30,000 after finding him guilty of six counts of giving false statements and submitting fake documents to the MACC during a 2017 investigation into claims of his extraordinary wealth.

Justice Yaacob, who delivered the court's unanimous decision, held that Adam Rosly's conviction was supported by evidence.

He issued a warrant of committal against Adam Rosly, 33, for his jail sentence to take effect from Monday.

On the first two charges, Adam Rosly was accused of giving false statements to two MACC investigating officers, under Section 32(8)(c) of the Anti-Money Laundering, Anti-Terrorism Financing and Proceeds of Unlawful Activities Act 2001.

The statements were related to his career as a businessman, his income, luxury vehicles, RM1.2 million bungalow in Kampung Melayu Ampang, which was bought in cash, a RM200,000 loan from his mother-in-law and late grandmother, and a RM500,000 loan from an "Ah Long".

On the other four charges, he allegedly used two fake loan agreement documents from two individuals and two cash vouchers from his company, Gegas Mentari Holding Sdn Bhd, to mislead the MACC investigating officers.

He allegedly committed the offences at the MACC headquarters at the Federal Government Administrative Centre, Putrajaya, between 9am and 12.15pm on Feb 10, 2017, and between 9am and 2pm on Feb 22, the same year.

On Nov 26, 2019, he lost his appeal in the High Court. The court proceedings resumed on Monday to hear submissions by deputy public prosecutor Wong Poi Yoke, who submitted that the offences committed by Adam Rosly by giving false statements and documents to MACC to avoid declaring his wealth, which was under investigation, were serious offences.



Datuk Adam Rosly Abdullah

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Good performance despite pandemic

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THE Works Ministry under the Perikatan Nasional (PN) government has achieved a stellar result in the past year, meeting all except one per cent of the targets set under its key performance indicators (KPI).

Despite the limitations and challenges brought about by the global Covid-19 pandemic, the ministry was able to ensure the completion of 111 projects worth RM3.955 billion in 2020.

Senior Works Minister Datuk Seri Fadillah Yusof said these were a slew of projects in the construction industry from the public and private sectors worth RM78 billion that contributed four per cent to Malaysia's gross domestic product (GDP), with the economic spillover benefiting 196 other industries.

"The Covid-19 outbreak presented major challenges to several industries, including the infrastructure development and construction sectors.

"Alhamdulillah, at the ministry level, we managed to achieve a KPI of 99 per cent of the targets and recommendations entrusted to us," said Fadillah during a special interview on the ministry's report card in conjunction with the PN government's one-year anniversary.

Present were deputy secretary general (policies and development) Datuk Badrul Hisham Mohd, Construction Industry Development Board (CIDB) chief executive Datuk Ir Ahmad Asri Abdul Hamid and Malaysian Highway Authority director-general Datuk Ir Mohd Shuhaimi Hassan.



Senior Works Minister Datuk Seri Fadillah Yusof with a summary of the Works Ministry's achievements in 2020. PIC BY MOHAMAD SHAHRIL BADRI SAALI

Setahun
MALAYSIA
PRIHATIN

The construction sector recorded losses of about RM11 billion when the first phase of the Movement Control Order (MCO) was implemented in March last year.

The losses were subsequently reduced by RM4.7 billion to RM6.9 billion when the government allowed the construction for 13 categories of projects to resume during the next phase of the MCO.

The losses were further mitigated following the decision by the government to roll out economic stimulus packages that included assistance,

subsidies and incentives that also benefited industry players and the community in the construction sector.

PRIHATIN RAKYAT ECONOMIC STIMULUS PACKAGE (PRIHATIN)

Among the projects that are very close to his heart and that of Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin, said Fadillah, were the initiatives and assistance introduced by the government through the implementation of the Prihatin Rakyat Economic Stimulus Package (Prihatin).

He said the ministry received RM450 million in allocations, which benefited 962 contractors from small construction companies and concessionaires from the G1 to the G4 categories.

The allocation was used to carry out 1,056 projects and activities in-

volving maintenance of roads and slopes in federal routes as well as buildings occupied by the federal government and quarters.

"The amount may appear small but made a significant impact to help contractors from the G1 to G4 categories during the challenging times brought about by the pandemic.

"This is because the projects made possible through the allocation reached the grassroots, subsequently helping to boost the economy at the district level," he said.

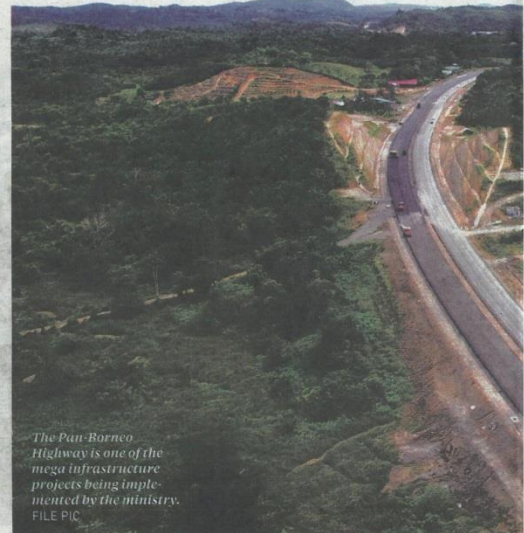
ENHANCING ROAD CONNECTIVITY IN THE EAST COAST

Another infrastructure for the people initiative that is a favourite of Fadillah is the progress achieved in the construction of the 310.1 km-long Central Spine Road (CSR) project.

Construction for the project commenced in stages under the Ninth Malaysia Plan and is divided into six main packages.

A total of RM7.57 billion in actual cost have been approved for the construction of the packages comprising a 47km-long road from Kuala Krai to Sungai Lakit bridge and subsequently 59.6km of roads (from Sungai Lakit bridge) to Gua Musang, both in Kelantan.

The other packages involved the construction of roads that will link Kelantan to Pahang. The packages are the construction of 93.4 km of roads from Gua Musang to Kampung Relong in Kuala Lipis, Pahang; from Kampung Relong to Raub (45km), from Raub to Bentong (54.1km) and from Bentong to the East Coast Highway Junction (11km).



The Pan-Borneo Highway is one of the mega infrastructure projects being implemented by the ministry. FILE PIC

Project management companies to monitor Pan-Borneo Highway

KUALA LUMPUR: The cabinet in principle has approved the appointment of project management companies to monitor the implementation of the multi-billion ringgit Pan-Borneo Highway in Sarawak and Sabah.

Senior Works Minister Datuk Seri Fadillah Yusof said the ministry was waiting for the approval from the Finance Ministry to appoint the project management companies.

"The project was implemented during the Barisan Nasional administration, which, at the time, had ap-

pointed project delivery partners (PDP) to monitor the development of the highways in Sarawak and Sabah.

"The PDP would cover all the responsibilities and demands with regard to the development of the highways on behalf of the government.

"The PDP, however, was terminated after the change of government by the PH administration. The responsibility of the PDP was handed over to the Public Works Department (PWD) in the states," he said.

The termination of the PDP, said

Fadillah, who is also the Petra Jaya member of Parliament, also contributed to delays in the construction of the projects.

The delays arose from the hand-over procedures from the PDP to the Public Works Departments in Sarawak and Sabah as the new superintending officer for the projects.

"At the moment, the PWD in Sabah and Sarawak is overwhelmed as it is also monitoring big volumes of projects being implemented in the two states.

"For example, in the case of

Sarawak, I do not think the PWD alone is able to manage the project," he said.

The termination of the PDP under the PH government had also resulted in the loss of jobs.

One of the conditions set for the project management companies is for them to re-engage all those PDP workers who were terminated previously.

"They will be given priority in terms of employment because of their experience and knowledge of the project," he said.

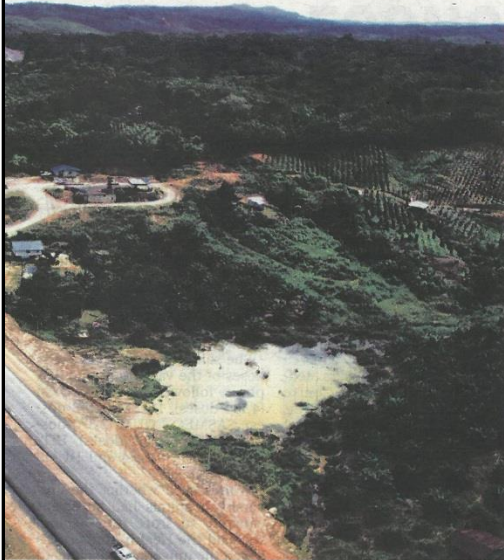
Datuk Azman Yusoff



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"The CSR will connect the state of Pahang from Bentong to the border of Kelantan and this mega road initiative is close to the people living in the East Coast states in the peninsula."

"The government is aware of the predicament among the people in Kelantan, who endure a 12-hour long journey whenever there is a festive occasion to return to their hometown."

"That is why we want to complete the packages according to schedule based on the budget available to us," he said.

To boost mobility in Kelantan and connect it with other parts of the country, Fadillah said the government was also working to speed up the construction of the Kota Baru-Kuala Krai highway.

The construction of the project

that is divided into three packages will connect the highway to one of the packages in the CSR project.

Fadillah said, 13.85km of roads under the project had been completed, 6.2km were being constructed while the construction for another 37.53km road was in the process of procurement.

PAN-BORNEO HIGHWAY IN SARAWAK AND SABAH

Fadillah, who is also the Petra Jaya member of parliament from Sarawak, provided updates on the construction of the Pan-Borneo Highway in his home state and Sabah.

Despite the setback and delay in the implementation of the mega infrastructure initiative due to the decision by the previous Pakatan Harapan administration to terminate

the project delivery partners for the Sarawak and Sabah stretches of the project, Fadillah said the PN government was committed to try to finish the highway based on the new completion date.

"We are looking into ways how we can make sure we can expedite the completion of the Pan-Borneo in Sarawak and Sabah," he said.

He said the development of the Pan-Borneo Highway in Sarawak that involved the construction of 784.41km from Telok Melano to Sematan and from Sematan to the Putat Link Road in Miri was 60 per cent completed.

As for the Pan-Borneo Highway in Sabah which involved the construction of 706km road, Fadillah said only 45 per cent of the project had been completed.

He said the only 15 of the 35 packages of the Pan-Borneo Highway project in Sabah were committed while the remaining packages were cancelled by the PH administration.

"The Sabah government is asking us to find ways to look for funds and mechanisms on how we can award the remaining 20 packages, which were terminated by PH."

"This is one of the areas that we are looking at now," he said.

BLACK SPOTS MADE SAFER

The ministry had also made improvement on black spots along the federal roads and highways nationwide to reduce and prevent accidents.

Up to last year, a total of RM43.1 million was spent to treat 159 blackspots in the country.

"The ministry is committed to enhance the safety of road users. This is reflected by the treatment conducted on black spots every year."

The programme to treat the black spots will continue to be implemented under the 12th Malaysia Plan (12MP).

"In fact, the ministry has identified 50 black spots to be improved under the 12MP with the exercise expected to start as early as this month," he said.

Helping contractors stay afloat

KUALA LUMPUR: The past 12 months have been anything but easy for small contractors due to the global Covid-19 pandemic, causing them to operate and generate income based on a hand-to-mouth basis.

Malaysian Bumiputera Contractors Association president Datuk Azman Yusoff said the numerous measures rolled out by the government through the Works Ministry, however, had mitigated the economic pressure brought about by the pandemic on small contractors.

Azman said the ministry, through the Construction Industry Development Board (CIDB), had provided assistance to small contractors to remain afloat despite the restrictions as the result of the implementation

of measures to prevent the spread of Covid-19.

"The (Senior Works) Minister (Datuk Seri Fadillah Yusoff) and his team at the ministry have shown concern about the welfare of contractors, especially those from small companies in sustaining their businesses."

"This was reflected in a series of engagements between the ministry, quality survey consultants and associations to find ways and measures to cushion the impact of the pandemic."

"They also understood the predicament and challenges that small contractors go through in adhering to the standard operating procedures (SOPs) introduced by the government to curb the spread of the outbreak," he said.

He cited the projects made possible following the rolling out of economic stimulus packages worth RM450 million, in which bidding for tender started in November last year, as having helped small contractors to make ends meet.

"I am sure the Public Works Department under the ministry will continue with all the initiatives to help small contractors."

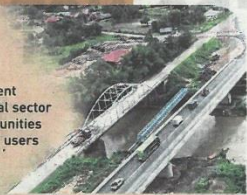
"I hope the contractors will remain calm and avoid being anxious since I am sure there will be more projects rolled out soon."

"At the same time, I call on contractors to comply with the SOP and do our bid to help the government to stop the spread of Covid-19," he said. **By Ahmad Suhael Adnan**

2020 ACHIEVEMENTS

TOWARDS THE WELLBEING OF THE RAKYAT

- Human capital development
- Creating a conducive environment for investment and the industrial sector
- Generating employment opportunities
- Comfort and safety among road users
- Quality infrastructure
- Prudent spending



ECONOMIC STIMULUS PACKAGE FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF SMALL CONTRACTORS

- Benefiting G1 until G4 contractors
- Allocation received: RM450 million
- 1,056 projects with progress financial development of up to 94.6 per cent
- Activities: Maintenance of roads and slopes in the federal routes; buildings occupied by the government and quarters



PAN-BORNEO HIGHWAY (RM27 BILLION)

A SARAWAK

Project Status:
60 per cent complete
Total Distance:
786.41km
Cost of Construction:
RM16.117 billion
(11 work packages)



B SABAH

Project Status:
45 per cent complete
Total Distance:
706km
Cost of Construction:
RM7.075 billion (for 15 of the total 35 packages)



INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT FOR THE RAKYAT

1. CENTRAL SPINE ROAD (CSR) PROJECT

Distance: 310.1km
Estimated Total Cost:
RM7.75 billion
Total Cost Approved To Date:
RM7.57 billion

Project Status:
Completed: 66.53km
Under Construction:
92.17km
Procurement Stage:
64.85km
Planning Phase:
78.35km



2. CONSTRUCTION OF PUTRA BRIDGE IN TANJUNG LUMPUR IN PAHANG AND FLYOVER FROM THE BUKIT SETONGKOL JUNCTION TO KEMUNTING, JALAN KUANTAN - GAMBANG

KOTA BARU TO KUALA KRAI, KELANTAN HIGHWAY PROJECT

Package 1: Wakaf Che Yeh to Kadok (10.8km)
Package 2: Kadok to Bukit Tiu, Machang (28.95km)
Package 3: Bukit Tiu to Kampung Rahmat, Kuala Krai (31.65km)
Estimated Total Cost:
RM2.7 billion
Total Cost Approved To Date:
RM2.34 billion
Project Status: 13.85km complete



INFORMATION NST

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DATASONIC GROUP BHD

ZAHID GIVEN CHEQUES FOR RM6M, COURT TOLD

Company's deputy
MD met with the
then DPM to explain
passport shortage,
says witness

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A MALAYSIAN Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) investigating officer revealed that Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi had received two cheques totalling RM6 million after a passport shortage problem occurred, which affected the Immigration Department's services.

Mohd Hizar Farhan Abdul Razi, 32, said the cheques were from IT services management company Datasonic Group Bhd (DGB) deputy managing director Chew Ben Ben.

DGB's subsidiary Datasonic Technologies Sdn Bhd (DTSB) was awarded a contract by the Ministry of Finance (MoF) in 2015 to supply passport chips for five

years or 12.5 million chips to be inserted into the polycarbonate biodata page of Malaysian passports.

The 91st prosecution witness said on Sept 16, 2016, Chew was called to meet Zahid to explain the passport shortage.

"In mid-April 2017, Chew was again called to meet the accused at the latter's official residence at Sri Satria, Putrajaya.

"After this meeting, Chew handed two cheques totalling RM6 million to the accused," Hizar told the High Court.

He was testifying in Zahid's trial over 47 charges of money-laundering, bribery and criminal breach of trust.

Meanwhile, during the re-examination by deputy public prosecutor Gan Peng Kun, Hizar said the contract was awarded to DTSB in line with the standard operating procedure (SOP) set by the MoF.

However, he said it would not have gone through without Zahid's agreement.

This, he said, was because Zahid was the home affairs minister

at that time.

Gan: Do you know what are the situations deemed non-compliant with the SOP?

Hizar: I don't know.

Gan: If the accused did not agree that the contract be awarded to DTSB, would MoF award the contract?

Hizar: No.

Asked by the accused's counsel, Datuk Ahmad Zaidi Zainal, why the contract would not be awarded to DTSB without Zahid agreeing to it, Hizar said it was because Zahid was the home affairs minister at that time.

He also testified that the MoF has the authority to award the contract and not the Home Ministry.

DGB and DTSB were implicated in the criminal charges against Zahid. The former deputy prime minister is accused of receiving a RM5 million cheque from Chew.

He is also charged with receiving another cheque of RM1 million from the same person in relation to the Malaysian passport chips.



Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad
Zahid Hamidi

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Companies linked to Zahid had no activities, employees but huge transactions recorded

» REPORTS BY KHAIRAH N. KARIM ON PAGE 8

BIBES TOTALLING RM13.25m

'LARGE TRANSACTIONS WERE RECORDED'

However no business activity seen at three companies' apartment units, says witness

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THREE companies linked to the corruption case of former deputy prime minister Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi were merely apartment units with no signs of business activities, a Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) investigating of-

ficer revealed.

Mohd Zamri Abdul Rashid, 36, said this was based on his investigation into the financial status of the companies, namely Mastoro Kenny IT Consultant & Services, Jogabonito Jewellery & Diamonds and Berani & Jujur Trading.

The 92nd prosecution witness also told the High Court that he found a huge amount of monies actively going in and out of the bank account of Berani & Jujur Trading.

"Based on my investigations, Berani & Jujur Trading did not have any employees and the registered address of the company was an apartment unit. There was also no sign of business activities carried out at the premises.

"This was also the case with Mastoro Kenny and Jogabonito

Jewellery," he said during re-examination by deputy public prosecutor Ahmad Sazilee Abdul Khairi.

Zamri was testifying in Zahid's trial of over 47 charges of money-laundering, bribery and criminal breach of trust involving millions of ringgit.

According to the 11th, 12th and 13th charges, Zahid, who was then the home minister, was alleged to have received bribes from the three companies via 10 cheques totalling RM13.25 million through Junaith Asharab Md Shariff as an inducement to help Mastoro Kenny secure projects from MyEG under the ministry.

Junaith Asharab, who was a witness in the trial, runs Berani & Jujur Trading, a textile wholesale company.

During cross-examination by Zahid's lawyer Hamidi Mohd Noh, the witness disagreed that the monies from the three companies were donations to charity foundation Yayasan Akalbudi, which belonged to Zahid.

He also disagreed with the lawyer's contention that the investigation he conducted was made in a biased manner.

Hamidi: You said on Oct 8, 2018, you received instructions to conduct investigations into the three companies?

Zamri: Yes.

Hamidi: Do you agree, and this is a fact, that Zahid was charged on Oct 19, 2018?

Zamri: Correct.

Hamidi: Do you agree that from Oct 8 to Oct 19 is 11 days?

Zamri: Yes.

Hamidi: Do you agree that is

only a short time for one to investigate until the accused was charged?

Zamri: I agree.

He also agreed with the lawyer that the investigations were still going on after Zahid was charged to obtain the original copies of the cheques related to the case, which required time.

Zamri then explained during re-examination by deputy public prosecutor Mohd Afif Ali that his investigations actually started in June 2018.

"I gathered the evidence and facts needed until the accused was charged and I am confident that my investigations were based on these facts I gained at that time. This is not biasness," he said.

The trial continues before judge Collin Lawrence Sequerah.

New Straits Times Paper | 6 Mac 2021 | Page: 8

MACC officer: Zahid's daughter not connected with Yayasan Akalbudi

KUALA LUMPUR: The High Court yesterday heard that Datuk Nurulhidayah Ahmad Zahid, the eldest daughter of former deputy prime minister Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi, had no connections with her father's charity foundation Yayasan Akalbudi.

This was revealed by a Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) investigating officer in Zahid's trial over 47 charges of money-laundering, bribery and criminal breach of trust in relation to Yayasan Akalbudi funds.

Muhammad Fazli Zulkifli, 36, testified that Nurulhidayah did not hold any position in the foundation.

"I confirm that Nurulhidayah held no position in Yayasan

Akalbudi.

"At that time, she was working with Syarikat Perumahan Negara Bhd (SPNB) as a marketing director," the witness said during examination-in-chief by deputy public prosecutor Ahmad Sazilee Abdul Khairi.

Previously, the High Court heard that Nurulhidayah would be appointed as a director of Ri-Yaz Assets Sdn Bhd on behalf of Yayasan Akalbudi for her planned takeover of the majority shares of the company when it was facing difficulties in repaying a US\$24.8 million Exim Bank loan for the purchase of a hotel in Bali, Indonesia.

However, Tan Sri Abdul Rashid Manaf, the former director of the hotel management firm (Ri-Yaz Assets) who testified at that time,



Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi arriving at the Kuala Lumpur High Court yesterday to attend his trial in relation to bribery and criminal breach of trust concerning Yayasan Akalbudi funds. BERNAMA PIC

told the court that he could not recall it being mentioned during the share takeover discussions.

Rashid said he had laid out several conditions for the takeover, and one of them was for Zahid to pay a deposit that was equivalent to the outstanding amount of Ri-Yaz Assets' loan.

Another witness, former chairman of Export-Import Bank of Malaysia Bhd Datuk Mat Noor Nawi, also previously testified that Zahid was willing to settle the overdue loan payment by using money from Yayasan

Akalbudi in his daughter's bid to take over some of the company's shares.

During yesterday's proceedings, Fazli said based on his investigations, Nurulhidayah was appointed as the director of Ri-Yaz Assets on Jan 27, 2017, replacing Rashid who had stepped down the same day.

"She then resigned as director on Jan 31, the same year.

"However, both Nurulhidayah and Rashid did not proceed with the share takeover agreement," said the 93rd prosecution witness.

He added that when the agreement did not proceed, Nurulhidayah and Zahid had asked for the money to be returned to the bank account of law firm Messrs Lewis & Co, as the money belonged to the foundation.

Fazli had also said in his testimony that on June 23, 2016, a banker's cheque of RM179 million was issued from the Yayasan Akalbudi account and transferred into the account of Lewis & Co upon Zahid's instructions.

He said from the amount, RM8.6 million was used to pay Ri-Yaz Assets' deposit for the takeover of 60 per cent of the shares from Rashid.

The trial continues before Judge Collin Lawrence Sequerah on Monday.



New Straits Times Paper | 9 Mac 2021 | Page: 8
CRIMINAL BREACH OF TRUST CHARGES

'WITHDRAWAL WAS NOT APPROVED'

MACC officer reveals foundation's board of trustees did not greenlight transfer of RM17.9m

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THE High Court yesterday heard that a total of RM17.9 million from Yayasan Akalbudi was taken out by Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi without the approval of the charity foundation's board of trustees.

This was revealed by a Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) investigating officer in the former deputy prime minister's trial over 47 charges of criminal breach of trust (CBT), bribery and money laundering involving tens of millions of ringgit from Yayasan Akalbudi.

Muhammad Fazli Zulkifli, 36, said based on his investigations, he found that CBT was committed on the RM17.9 million in funds, which were used for the purchase of company shares for Zahid's daughter, Datuk Nurulhidayah Ahmad Zahid, as well as to be placed as fixed deposits.

"There was CBT activity on the amount, as it did not get the approval of the other members of the board of trustees.

"The money was transferred into the client's account of law firm Lewis & Co," he said during re-

examination by deputy public prosecutor Ahmad Sazilee Abdul Khairi.

The 93rd prosecution witness said Zahid, who is also the founder of Yayasan Akalbudi, had instructed Messrs Lewis & Co to manage the monies.

He added that the law firm would act only upon Zahid's instructions.

He also confirmed that nobody on the board had given instructions to Lewis & Co, specifically its partner B. Muralidharan, in regard to the monies.

Asked about Zahid's cautioned statement to the MACC, Fazli said he had conducted investigations into the other witnesses in relation to the statement.

Sazilee: Can you explain the comparison you did with the cautioned statement by Zahid?

Fazli: Based on Zahid's statement, he said Yayasan Akalbudi was interested in investing in Ri-Yaz Assets Sdn Bhd (a hotel management firm) in the hotel industry, while the other witnesses said that Nurulhidayah was interested to make an investment and Yayasan Akalbudi paid for it.

Sazilee: How about the testimony of Tan Sri Abdul Rashid Abdul Manaf (Ri-Yaz Assets shareholder)?

Fazli: According to Rashid's statement, there was a problem with the hotel in Indonesia and the solution given was either to sell off the hotel or sell his shares... Nurulhidayah then ex-



Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi attending the trial at the Kuala Lumpur High Court yesterday. PIC BY SAIFULLIZAN TAMADI



pressed interest in investing in Ri-Yaz Assets.

The witness also testified that there were no documents to show that Yayasan Akalbudi had invested in Ri-Yaz Assets.

"The investment only involved Rashid and Nurulhidayah," he added.

Asked whether there were any documents to show that Nurulhidayah was an observer or a proxy in Ri-Yaz Assets, Fazli an-

swered in the negative.

On Friday, Fazli testified that Zahid was involved in the withdrawal of RM17.9 million from Yayasan Akalbudi.

He said RM8.6 million was paid to Ri-Yaz Assets as a deposit for a share purchase, with another RM9.3 million to be placed as fixed deposits.

He said Zahid instructed that the money from Yayasan Akalbudi's Affin Bank account be transferred to a Maybank account be-

longing to Messrs Lewis & Co (the foundation's trustee).

He also testified that Nurulhidayah had no connections with her father's charity foundation, nor had she held any positions in it.

Zahid, 68, faces 47 charges, 12 of them for criminal breach of trust, eight for corruption and 27 for money laundering involving funds from Yayasan Akalbudi.

The trial continues before judge Collin Lawrence Sequerah.

New Straits Times Paper | 10 Mac 2021 | Page: 8

'Cheques suspected to have been used by Zahid for money laundering'

KUALA LUMPUR: More than 400 documents pertaining to the corruption trial of Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi were verified in the High Court yesterday.

The documents involved millions of ringgit of funds from Yayasan Akalbudi, a charity foundation owned by Zahid.

Malaysian Anti-Corruption

Commission (MACC) investigating officer Mohd Amirudin Nordin, 38, spent about three hours verifying some 406 documents which were adduced as evidence in the trial.

The 96th prosecution witness said the documents, which comprised, among others, cheques, receipts, bank drafts, banker's

cheques, letters, forms and deposit slips, were from the files of law firm Messrs Lewis & Co which he obtained during his investigation. Lewis & Co was previously identified as the trustee for Yayasan Akalbudi.

Amirudin also testified that 73 cheques from various banks were suspected to have been used by

Zahid which were deposited into the bank account of the law firm.

"Based on the documents I obtained, the cheques were suspected to have been used by Zahid for money-laundering activities," he said during examination-in-chief conducted by deputy public prosecutor Harris Ong Mohd Jeffery Ong.

Amirudin will continue to testify when the trial continues today before judge Collin Lawrence Sequerah.

Zahid, 68, faces 47 charges, 12 of them for criminal breach of trust, eight for corruption and 27 for money laundering involving tens of millions of ringgit of funds from Yayasan Akalbudi.

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RECEIVING KICKBACKS, MONEY LAUNDERING

Ex-TH chairman fails in bid to quash 13 charges

KUALA LUMPUR: The trial of former Tabung Haji chairman Datuk Seri Abdul Azeez Abdul Rahim will continue after the High Court yesterday dismissed an application to have his case thrown out.

The 54-year-old Baling member of parliament is facing three counts of receiving kickbacks and 10 money laundering charges involving road projects.

Judge Datuk Muhammad Jamil Hussin ruled that the charges against Azeez were not defective and the prosecution against the accused was in accordance with the law.

"I find that the grounds the accused had relied on in his application have no merit. The accused has also failed to show that the prosecution against him was mala fide (in bad faith).

"Therefore, the application is dismissed," the judge said.

Azeez, whose trial is ongoing at the Sessions Court here, had sought for his charges to be struck out, claiming that the charges were defective, groundless and made in bad faith.

Jamil, in his judgment, said there were no issues of duplicity or multiplicity in the charges as the offence of receiving kickbacks was related to the same four projects in the case.

"On the grounds cited by the applicant that the charges were defective, in my view, although the four different projects in the case were combined into a singular charge, the charge is not defective.

"The offence does not involve the act of receiving bribes for each of the four projects, but the act of receiving bribes was for all the four projects. Therefore, there is no ambiguity in the charges."

The judge said Azeez had in his application failed to show how he was confused and being preju-



Datuk Seri Abdul Azeez Abdul Rahim leaving the Kuala Lumpur High Court yesterday. PIC BY HAIRUL ANUAR RAHIM

diced by the lack of particularisation in the charges.

"The lack of details such as in what way and how the accused had accepted the money, and that there is no mention of the exact date and location does not make the charges defective. This is only an issue of omission (of details)."

He said it was premature for the court to decide that all the charges were baseless at this stage.

Azeez filed the application to strike out the 13 charges on Dec 11.

According to the court's e-filing system, the trial is set to continue on Monday.

Azeez was charged with three counts of accepting bribes totalling RM5.2 million in connection with road projects in Perak and Kedah, as well as 10 counts of money laundering.

He is accused of committing the offences at CIMB Bank in Jalan Tun Perak, Kuala Lumpur, on Dec 8, 2010 and at Affin Bank in Pusat Bandar Puchong, Selangor, on June 13, 2017 and April 10, 2018, while the money laundering offences were allegedly committed in the Klang Valley between March 8, 2010, and Aug 30, 2018.

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A-GC TO DECIDE ON FURTHER ACTION

Probe papers on meat cartel suspects submitted

JOHOR BARU: The Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) has submitted investigation papers on suspects linked to the meat cartel to the Attorney-General's Chambers (A-GC) for further action.

Johor MACC director Datuk Azmi Alias said the papers were submitted two weeks ago.

"We are waiting for a decision from the A-GC on whether there is a need for us to investigate further or for the suspects to be charged."

He said 12 suspects had been arrested in connection with the case, including civil servants, company directors and agents.

"Besides us, other agencies like the police, Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs Ministry and Malaysian Quarantine and Inspection Services are also investigating."

He was speaking after the launch of the MACC Anti-Corruption CD by MACC Deputy Chief Commissioner (Prevention) Datuk Seri Shamsun Baharin Mohd Jamil.

It was reported that the cartel has been importing non-certified meat and selling it as halal in Malaysia.

The cartel has reportedly been operating for more than 40 years by importing meat



Datuk Azmi Alias

from non-halal-certified slaughterhouses in a few countries, such as Brazil, Bolivia, Canada, Colombia, Spain and Mexico.

The meat would be taken to warehouses and mixed with halal-certified meat and repackaged with fake halal logos, then sold in the market.

On another matter, Azmi said the MACC had also submitted investigation papers to the A-GC on claims by PKR's Sekijang member of parlia-

ment Natrah Ismail that she was offered a RM10 million bribe to switch parties.

"We are waiting for a decision from the A-GC. Four witnesses were called for the investigation, including Natrah."

Earlier this month, Natrah claimed she was approached to switch parties and support Perikatan Nasional and Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin.

She claimed that she was approached by two people, including someone with a Datuk Seri title, asking if she was interested in supporting Muhyiddin and promised benefits in return.

She lodged a report on the matter at the Segamat MACC branch office.

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LORRY DRIVER PROTECTION RACKET

RTD OFFICERS AMONG 44 HELD BY MACC

Op in 5 states sees
32 RTD staff hauled
up for taking bribes
of between RM150
and RM3,000 a month

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THE Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) detained 44 individuals, including 32 Road Transport Department (RTD) officers, believed to be connected to a lorry driver protection racket, during a major operation in five states on Monday.

Also detained was a traffic police officer, a former traffic police officer and 10 civilians.

In Kedah, 11 were arrested including eight RTD officers, a traffic police officer, a former traffic



Datuk Seri Azam Baki

officer and a civilian.

In Penang, nine RTD officers were nabbed while in Perak, eight RTD officers and a civilian were detained.

In Perlis, one civilian was arrested while in Melaka, seven RTD officers and four civilians

were detained.

The RTD officers were believed to be from various ranks including senior officers, with the civilians acting as proxies.

Sources said the RTD officers had been giving protection to errant lorry drivers carrying loads beyond their weight limit, as well as those failing to meet technical safety aspects.

"The (suspected) RTD officers would not take action against errant lorry drivers after receiving bribes which were transferred directly into their bank account or that of their proxies every month.

"They (suspects) received between RM150 and RM3,000 a month, with the total amount of bribe money at RM1.64 million.

"The lorry driver protection racket is believed to have taken place between 2019 and last year," the source said.

MACC Chief Commissioner Datuk Seri Azam Baki, when contacted, confirmed the arrests in the operation codenamed Op Sukat.

He said the operation was carried out with cooperation between the MACC and the RTD, particularly the director-general and the RTD Integrity Department.

"For now, investigations are ongoing and we are looking to make several more arrests as they progress.

"This aspect (bribery) is highlighted in Sections 16 and 17 of the MACC Act 2009.

"We will try our best to expedite the probe into the matter," he added.

Yesterday morning, three RTD officers were brought to the magistrate's court in Penang to be remanded.

The four-day remand order against the three was granted by assistant registrar Muhammad Azam Md Eusoff.

The three were brought to the court building at 10.30am.

Lorry driver protection rackets

are not new, with the most recent case being reported in 2019.

In April 2019, 75 Penang RTD enforcement officers, ranked between Grade 19 and 32, were believed to have received monthly kickbacks of between RM10,000 and RM32,000 as inducement for not taking action against errant lorry drivers as well as leaking

information about RTD operations.

The lorries were supplied with special stickers prepared by *tontos* (thugs), allowing them to be exempted from enforcement actions.

In a blitz from April 9 to April 22, 60 state RTD enforcement officers were arrested and have since been prosecuted in courts.

Out of 457 RTD staff in Penang then, 139 were enforcement officers.

At that time, there were about 8,000 RTD personnel nationwide.

The lorry driver protection racket is believed to have taken place between 2019 and last year.

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PARTIES NEGOTIATING SETTLEMENT

New judge for 1MDB-PetroSaudi suit

KUALA LUMPUR: The government suit to recover more than US\$340 million of 1Malaysia Development Bhd (1MDB) money from PetroSaudi International (PSI) and its director Tarek Obaid will be heard before a new High Court judge.

The case was initially to be heard before High Court judge Mohd Nazlan Mohd Ghazali before he was transferred to the civil High Court earlier this month.

Deputy public prosecutor Budiman Lutfi Mohamed, when met after the management of the case yesterday, said judge Datuk Ahmad Shahrir Mohd Salleh has fixed Sept 6 and 7 to hear the case.

Meanwhile, he said the government is in the midst of seeking a settlement between all parties involved in this case.

However, he declined to comment further.

"I am sorry but I cannot reveal any further detail as the engagement is still ongoing," Budiman said before leaving the courtroom.

It was reported earlier that all parties involved in this forfeiture suit are negotiating a settlement.

The government, on July 14 last year initiated legal proceedings to recover more than US\$340 million stashed in the United Kingdom-based law firm Clyde & CO LLP belonging to PSI and its subsidiary company Petrosaudi Oil Services (Venezuela) Limited.

The government, through the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC), is also seeking to freeze an unspecified amount of money deposited in an intermediate account of Temple Fidu-

ciary Services at Barclays Bank.

The application was related to an offence under Section 4(1) of the Anti-Money Laundering, Anti-Terrorism Financing and Proceeds of Unlawful Activities Act 2001 (Amlatfapuaa).

Two days later, the High Court issued a temporary order to prevent PSI, its director Tarek Obaid and several entities from moving US\$340 million in funds stashed in the foreign law firm.

The order would last until the disposal of the asset forfeiture application filed by the government through the MACC.

However, deputy public prosecutor Muhammad Izzat Fauzan told the High Court that the UK's National Crime Agency, in an email to the Attorney-General's Chambers, said it was having difficulty enforcing the order.

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GOVT GETS TO FORFEIT RM48M FROM JHO LOW'S FATHER » PAGE 8

1MDB

RM48M SEIZED FROM JHO LOW'S FATHER

No third party appeared to contest govt's forfeiture action

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THE High Court here yesterday allowed the government to forfeit more than RM48 million seized from Tan Sri Larry Low Hock Peng, fugitive financier Low Taek Jho's father.

Judge Mohamed Zaini Mazlan made the decision after allowing the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission's (MACC) application.

The authorities had frozen Hock Peng's accounts as part of their investigations into whether the money in his accounts was part of the 1Malaysia Development Bhd (1MDB) loot.

During the proceedings, MACC deputy public prosecutor Shafinaz Shabudin said no third party appeared to contest the forfeiture action.

On March 29, 2019, the government had filed a civil forfeiture action to freeze seven bank accounts belonging to Hock Peng with the intention to forfeit them, claiming the amount in them was from money laundering.

The cash seized included mon-



Tan Sri Larry Low Hock Peng's (inset) bank accounts were frozen by the authorities as part of their investigations into whether the money in them was part of the 1Malaysia Development Bhd loot. AFP PIC

ey that was in Hock Peng's current and fixed deposit accounts in RHB Bank Bhd and Malayan Banking Bhd (Maybank) branches at KLCC here and Plaza MWE in Penang.

The money seized included:

RM20.7 million in a current account (RHB bank),
RM300,000 fixed deposit (RHB Bank),
RM500,000 fixed deposit (RHB Bank),
RM20 million fixed deposit (RHB bank),
RM6.6 million fixed deposit (Maybank),
RM462,618 in a current account

(Maybank), and;
RM318,021 in a current account (Maybank).

Hock Peng and his son, also known as Jho Low, have been on the run since the government initiated moves to get back billions of ringgit linked to 1MDB.

The forfeiture was among the first initiated by the government

on matters related to the sovereign wealth fund.

It was done under Section 56 of the Anti Money Laundering, Anti-Terrorism Financing and Proceeds of Unlawful Activities Act 2001.

Besides the money in the bank accounts, the authorities had also seized Jho Low's family home in Penang, named El Nitsjo.

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UNDERSEA TUNNEL PROJECT

Penang assemblymen among prosecution witnesses

KUALA LUMPUR: Several Penang state assemblymen will be among 125 witnesses listed by the prosecution to testify in former finance minister Lim Guan Eng's undersea tunnel project-linked corruption trial.

Deputy public prosecutor Wan Shahrudin Wan Ladin said the prosecution had handed over all documents related to the trial to the defence team.

The documents include forensic evidence and expert reports from the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission.

"A list of 125 potential witness-

es for this trial has also been given to them," he said.

The former Penang chief minister was not present during yesterday's proceedings as he had obtained an exemption from the court.

In December last year, judge Azura Alwi fixed a total of 31 days of trial to take place on several dates in June to December this year.

They are June 8-11, July 12-16, July 28-29, Aug 16-20, Sept 6-10, Sept 20-24 and Dec 13-17.

Lim is accused of using his position as chief minister to ask

Consortium Zenith Construction Sdn Bhd senior director Zarul Ahmad Mohd Zulkifli for a 10 per cent cut of the profits, which would have been made from the tunnel project.

He is also charged with seeking a further RM3.3 million kickback to appoint Zarul's company for the project.

The Bagan member of parliament was also slapped with two additional counts of dishonestly misappropriating RM208.7 million worth of state land for two companies at the Butterworth Sessions Court.



Defence counsel Sangeet Kaur Deo leaving the Kuala Lumpur Courts Complex after the proceedings involving former Penang chief minister Lim Guan Eng yesterday. PIC BY EIZAIRI SHAMSUDIN