

NEWS PAPER CUTTING ON MAY 2021
NEWS STRAIT TIMES

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Kelantan MACC: Lowest bribe recorded last year was RM152

KOTA BARU: Bribery is an offence regardless of the amount. Kelantan Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC), in revealing annual statistics yesterday, said the lowest bribe it recorded was RM152 in a case from last year. Kelantan MACC director Rosli Husain said a man offered Immigration enforcement officers the bribe as an inducement to prevent the detention of several undocumented immigrants in Gua Musang. "We will not tolerate any amount. A bribe is a bribe." He said the man was arrested and hauled to court. He said seven civil servants had been arrested this year for accepting bribes. "They were detained in several locations in the state in a series of anti-graft operations between January and this month. Four have been charged in court."

NEWS STRAIT TIMES/20 MAY 2021/

SEIZED FROM PAVILION RESIDENCES

GOVT FAILS TO FORFEIT RM114M

Investigating officer failed to establish a money trail to prove cash came from unlawful activities, rules court

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THE government has failed in its bid to forfeit RM114 million in cash that was seized by the police during a raid at the Pavilion Residences in 2018, soon after the fall of the then prime minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak's-led Barisan Nasional administration.

High Court Judge Datuk Muhammad Jamil Hussin ruled the Attorney-General's Chambers had failed to prove that the money originated from IMalaysia Development Bhd (IMDB), or was

obtained from a criminal breach of trust offence.

However, he did not rule on the release of the money which is kept inside Bank Negara Malaysia's vault, causing confusion to both parties.

Earlier, Jamil in his decision, said the investigating officer failed to establish a money trail to prove that the cash originated from unlawful activities.

"He (investigating officer) also failed to identify the person who has the power to control IMDB funds.

"Furthermore, there is no evidence to show several sums of the RM114 million were converted into foreign currencies.

"The witnesses said they only spent the cash that they received without mentioning anything about converting the monies to other foreign currencies," he said.

Deputy public prosecutor Mohd Saifuddin Hashim Musaimi then applied for a stay of execution pending a written appeal.

He said the court also needed to determine other issues concerning the cash as the case involved



Former prime minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak fielding questions from the media upon leaving the Kuala Lumpur Courts Complex yesterday. Present are counsel Tan Sri Muhammad Shafee Abdullah (left) and Tania Scivetti (right). BERNAMA PIC

two third-party claimants.

However, Jamil said the court has no power to make consequential orders for the release of the monies as he already dismissed the forfeiture application.

Saifuddin then insisted on a stay order as the police needed to determine the recipient of the cash.

"We have two different third-party claimants — Najib and Umno. If the lawyer asks to release the money to Najib, what about Umno?"

"So the court must decide who is going to receive it," said Saifuddin.

Jamil, however, stood by his decision that the court does not need to issue any direction before

he dismissed the stay application.

Meanwhile, Najib's counsel Tan Sri Muhammad Shafee Abdullah, at a press conference later, said they would write a letter asking the government to release the monies as soon as possible.

"We will ask them to return the money within 24 hours to our client," he said.

Najib, who was also present at the press conference, said the court decision was a victory for him in clearing his name and reputation.

"They have thrown various allegations against me... they said I misused the money. I am a robber, and a rogue which had tarnished my reputation as a leader.

"Today (yesterday), it was

proven that all the malicious and slander allegations against me are false," he said.

The government wanted to forfeit RM114,164,393.44 in cash and jewellery, and high-end fashion items seized from the premises owned by Obyu Holdings Sdn Bhd.

They alleged the money and items were linked to IMDB.

The prosecution had contended that Najib had allegedly received a total of US\$971 million, said to be IMDB's money, from 2011 to 2013, and that the money seized from the condo was part of the illicit funds.

Besides the money, the raid also yielded 12,000 pieces of jewellery, valuable watches and expensive handbags.

NEWS STRAIT TIMES/23 MAY 2021/

MEAT CARTEL SCANDAL

6 MAQIS OFFICERS TO FACE CHARGES

A cold storage company manager is also expected to be charged today, says the MACC

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Zamri Hisham

SIX Malaysian Quarantine and Inspection Services Department (Maqis) enforcement officers and a cold storage company manager are expected to be charged over the meat cartel fiasco.

The Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) said that they would be charged at the Sessions Court here this morning.

The *New Straits Times* and *Berita Harian* previously reported that a cartel had been importing non-certified meat and selling them as halal meat in Malaysia.

Another Malay daily also broke the news on its operations in Johor.

The cartel has reportedly been operating for over 40 years and imported meat from non-halal-certified slaughterhouses in a few countries, such as Brazil, Bolivia, Canada, Colombia, Spain and Mexico.

The meat, smuggled out of the port, would be taken to warehouses where it would be mixed with halal-certified meat, repacked with fake halal logos and then sold in the market.

A total of RM6.47 million worth of uncertified meat was seized by the authorities.

On April 23, a company, including its two directors and manager, was charged in the Sessions Court on four counts of possessing and conspiracy involving prohibited frozen goods in December last year.

It involved 5,224 boxes containing frozen chicken parts, beef, mutton, turkey and duck worth RM643,465.39.

Syarikat LY Frozen Food Sdn Bhd, its directors Yong Chee Keong, 40, and Tan Siew Huak,

42, who are still at large, and manager Chong Kim Kuang, 48, pleaded not guilty to the charges.

On Feb 9, the same company and executives pleaded not guilty at the Sessions Court here to 21 counts of possessing and distributing unauthorised frozen products and using false and unauthorised halal logos.

They were accused of possessing and distributing 3,418 packages of frozen products without the approval of two Australian companies and using false and unauthorised halal logos from two Australian certification bodies.

Meanwhile, in **Port Klang**, Maqis on Friday seized four containers carrying 120,000kg of onions from India, after discrepancies were found on the import permit.

Selangor Maqis director Zamri Hisham said the consignment, valued at RM150,000, was seized by enforcement officers at 12.15pm.

"Maqis found that the consignment did not comply with the requirements of the 3P Certificate (Grading, Packaging and Labelling) Regulations.

"Investigations also revealed that the consignment is meant for local distribution to wholesalers."

Zamri said they had seized all four containers.

He said the failure to comply with import conditions and regulations was an offence under Section 15 (1) of the Quarantine and Examination Services Act 2011 [Act 728].

NEWS STRAIT TIMES/23 MAY 2021/



Four Malaysian Quarantine and Inspection Services Department enforcement officers arriving at the Johor Baru Sessions Court to be charged yesterday. PIC BY NUR AISYAH MAZALAN

RM100 and RM30 respectively from Abdul Latif A. Rahman as an inducement to expedite the physical and document inspection of a consignment.

They were accused of committing the offence at the MAQIS office at the Sultan Abu Bakar Complex on Nov 10 and Oct 5, 2020, respectively.

Both accused, who were unrepresented, were charged under Section 25(1) of the MACC Act 2009, which is punishable under Section 25(2) of the same Act.

Khairul Izat was fined RM1,500, or a month in jail if he fails to pay the fine. Sentencing for Sofyan was fixed for June 29 so he could appoint a lawyer.

His bail was set at RM5,000 with one surety.

Also charged was Abdul Latif A Rahman, the manager of a logistics company.

He pleaded not guilty to two charges of submitting import declaration forms containing false information on behalf of Syarikat LY Frozen Sdn Bhd to a Customs officer.

He was accused of committing the offences on Oct 5 and Nov 9, 2020, at Wisma Kastam, Port of Tanjung Pelepas.

He was charged under Section 18 of the MACC Act 2009, which is punishable under Section 24(2) of the same Act.

He faces two alternative

charges of submitting false import document on behalf of Syarikat LY Frozen Sdn Bhd for the two offences.

The alternative charges are under Section 471 of the Penal Code and punishable under Section 465 of the same Code.

Bail for Latif, who was represented by counsel A. Vijaya, was set at RM8,000 with one surety, and mention is fixed for June 29.

Deputy public prosecutors Wan Shaharuddin Wan Ladin and Suhaili Sapun appeared for the prosecution.

The proceedings were conducted before judge Datuk Ahmad Kamal Arifin Iamail.

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MAQIS ENFORCEMENT STAFF, COMPANY MANAGER CHARGED IN MEAT CARTEL CASE » PAGE 10

MACC ACT

FOUR MAQIS OFFICERS CHARGED

Two claim trial while two others plead guilty in meat cartel case

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FOUR Malaysian Quarantine and Inspection Services Department (MAQIS) enforcement officers, along with a manager of a logistics company, were charged at the Sessions Court here over the meat cartel case.

Nor Azlan Mat Suki, 40, pleaded not guilty to five charges of receiving a total of RM35,000 as inducements to release 40 containers carrying frozen meat belonging to Syarikat ZS Armin Sdn Bhd from countries not recognised by the Veterinary Services Department (VSD).

He was accused of committing the offences between February and April 2017 at a restaurant in Iskandar Puteri.

He was charged under Section

16(a)(B) of the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) Act 2009, which is punishable under Section 24(1) of the same Act.

Nor Azlan, who was represented by counsel Peter Tan, was granted a RM7,000 bail with one surety, and mention was fixed for June 29.

Mohd Hafizan Khalid, 44, pleaded not guilty to a charge of receiving RM2,500 as an inducement to release a container carrying frozen meat belonging to Syarikat ZS Armin Sdn Bhd from countries not recognised by VSD.

He was accused of committing the offence at a restaurant here in December 2016.

Hafizan, who was represented by counsel Mohd Razak Sharif, was charged under Section 16(a)(B) of the MACC Act 2009, which is punishable under Section 24(1) of the same Act.

His bail was set at RM7,000 with one surety, and mention is fixed on June 29.

Two other MAQIS personnel pleaded guilty to the charge of failing to report to MACC after receiving bribes.

Khairul Izat Sulaiman, 31, and Mohammad Sofyan Mohd Zain, 27, were accused of failing to report to MACC after receiving

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40 CHARGES

Zahid's Foreign Visa System graft trial starts today

SHAH ALAM: The corruption trial of former deputy prime minister Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi, who is facing 40 charges over the Foreign Visa System (VLN), will start at the High Court here today, with the prosecution set to call two or three witnesses to testify.

The trial will be heard before judge Datuk Mohd Yazid Mustafa at 9am.

"Yes, the trial will go on tomorrow (today).

"We expect to call two or three witnesses," deputy public prosecutor Datuk Raja Rozela Raja Toran, who will lead the prosecution team, said in a text message. Lawyers Hisyam Teh Poh Teik and Hamidi Mohd Noh are representing Zahid, 68.

Prior to this, Raja Rozela had informed the court that the prosecution would call 15 witnesses to testify.

This will be the Umno president's second trial following the ongoing hearing at the Kuala Lumpur High Court, in which he is facing 47 criminal breach of trust, corruption and money laundering charges involving tens of millions of ringgit belonging to Yayasan Akaibudi.

In this VLN case, Zahid pleaded not guilty to 33 charges of receiving bribes amounting to S\$13.56 million from Ultra Kirana Sdn Bhd as an inducement for himself in his capacity as a civil servant, then as home minister, to extend the contract of the company as the operator of One Stop Centre (OSC) in China and the VLN system, as well as to maintain the agreement to supply VLN integrated system paraphernalia to the same company by the Home Ministry.

He allegedly committed the offences at Seri Satria, Precinct 16, Putrajaya, and in Country Heights, Kajang, between October 2014 and March 2018.

The charges framed under Section 16(a)(B) of the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) Act 2009 and can be punished under Section 24(1) of the same act, provides a maximum of 20 years in jail and a fine not less than five times of the value of the gratification or RM10,000, whichever is higher upon conviction.

The Bagan Datuk member of parliament also pleaded not guilty to 33 alternative charges under Section 165 of the Penal Code as home minister for receiving bribes amounting to S\$13.56 million in relation to the VLN system between 2014 to 2017.

For another seven charges, he was charged as home minister for accepting S\$1,150,000, RM3,000,000, 15,000 euros and US\$15,000 in cash from the same company, which he knew had connection with his function as home minister.

He was charged with committing the offences at a house in Country Heights between June 2015 and October 2017, under Section 165 of the Penal Code, which carries a maximum jail term of two years or fine, or both, if found guilty. **Bernama**

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APPROVING TENDERS

Fisheries officer claims trial to bribery



Mohd Rafi Hassan being taken to the Sessions Court in Kota Baru yesterday. PIC BY NIK ABDULLAH NIK OMAR

KOTA BARU: A Fisheries Department officer was charged at the Sessions Court here yesterday with five counts of bribery involving RM31,425 from a company owned by his sister-in-law.

Mohd Rafi Hassan, 56, however, pleaded not guilty before judge Zaman Mohd Noor.

On the first charge, Rafi was accused of using his position as aquaculture branch chief at the Kelantan Fisheries Office to gain gratification by approving the tender to supply and deliver 1,000 grouper fry worth RM6,900 to YY Indah Enterprise, a company owned by his sister-in-law,

on Jan 22, 2019.

On the second charge, he was accused of gaining gratification when approving the tender to the same company for the supply and delivery of fish hormones worth RM7,500 to Machang Aquaculture Centre on Jan 31, 2019.

For the third charge, he was accused of gaining gratification by approving the tender for the same supplier for the supply of brine shrimps for fish worth RM15,800 on March 27, 2019.

On the fourth and fifth charges, Rafi was accused of gaining gratification by approving a tender to the same supplier for the supply

of fish hormones worth RM725 on April 4, 2019 and the supply of fish food worth RM500 on April 16, 2019.

He faces a maximum of 20 years' jail and a fine of not less than five times the amount or value of the gratification, whichever is higher.

Deputy public prosecutor Nor Hamizah Ghazali prosecuted the case while the accused was represented by Cheah Poh Loon. Zaman allowed the accused to be released on a RM6,000 bail with one surety.

He set July 7 for the case to be re-mentioned.



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40 CHARGES LEVELLED AGAINST ZAHID IN NEW GRAFT TRIAL

» PAGE 12

33 COUNTS OF BRIBERY

DPP: 20 WITNESSES TO TESTIFY AGAINST ZAHID

Prosecution says it will prove how the then home minister abused his position to reap riches

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THE prosecution is expected to call 20 witnesses to testify against former deputy prime minister Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi, who is facing 40 charges over the Foreign Visa System (VLN) scandal.

Deputy public prosecutor Raja Datuk Rozela Raja Toran, who is leading the prosecution team, said the witnesses will be testifying under oath on how Zahid had taken advantage of his position as the then home minister to reap riches through corrupt means.

She said the prosecution would prove how Zahid had abused his position throughout his four-year tenure as home minister.

"We will show how he received bribes in various currencies, including S\$14.71 million, RM3.125 million, US\$15,000 and £5,000 from Ultra Kirana Sdn Bhd (UKSB).

"UKSB was a company which was appointed by the govern-

ment as a contractor to supply and provide services for the Home Ministry," she said in her opening statement on the first day of the trial.

Later, deputy registrar at the Registrar of Companies Malaysia (SSM) Muhamad Akmaludin Abdullah, 38, who was the first prosecution witness revealed all the information regarding UKSB.

He said UKSB was a private company that engaged in the outsourcing of visa facilitation services in the country.

He added that based on records dated Sept 10, 2013, the company had four directors — Harry Lee Vui Khun, Tan Siong Sun, Wan Quoris Wan Abdul Ghani and Fadzil Ahmad.

However, according to the company's Notification of Change In The Register of Directors, Managers And Secretaries form dated Jan 30, 2018, it stated that only Wan Quoris and Fadzil remained as its directors, he said.

Meanwhile, Zahid issued a press statement after the proceedings.

The statement, which was distributed by his press secretary, said Zahid denied all allegations and maintained his innocence.

"Zahid never received any bribes from UKSB as the appointment of UKSB was not done dur-

ing his tenure as the home minister.

"He is innocent until proven guilty," it was stated in the statement.

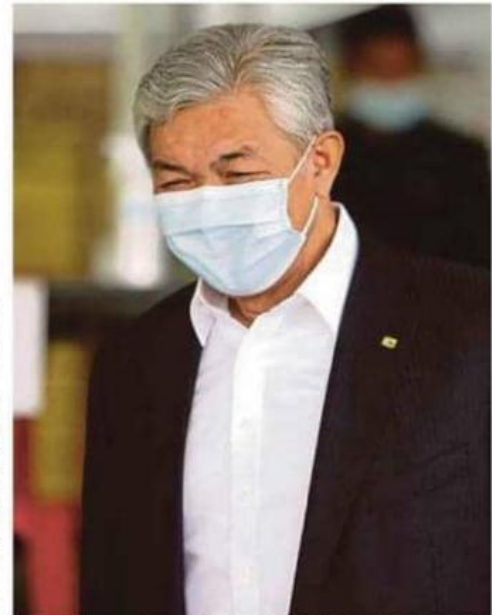
Zahid is on trial for 33 counts of receiving bribes amounting to S\$13.56 million from UKSB.

The money was received as an inducement for himself in his capacity as a civil servant (then home minister) to extend the contract of a company as the operator of a One Stop Centre (OSC) in China and the VLN system as well as to maintain the agreement to supply VLN integrated system paraphernalia to the same company by the Home Ministry.

He allegedly committed the offences at Seri Satria, Precinct 16, Putrajaya and in Country Heights, Kajang, between October 2014 and March 2018.

The charges framed under Section 16 (a)(b) of the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) Act 2009 can be punished under Section 24(1) of the same act and provides for a maximum of 20 years' jail and a fine of not less than five times of the value of the gratification or RM10,000, whichever is higher upon conviction.

The Bagan Datuk MP also pleaded not guilty to 33 alternative charges under Section 165 of



Former deputy prime minister Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi arriving at the Shah Alam High Court for his foreign visa system graft trial, which began yesterday. PIC BY MOHAMAD SHAHRIL BADRI SAALI

the Penal Code as home minister for receiving bribes amounting to S\$13.56 million in relation to the VLN system between 2014 and 2017.

For another seven charges, Zahid was charged as home minister for accepting S\$1,150,000, RM3,000,000, €15,000 and US\$15,000 in cash from the same company which he knew had connection with his function as the then home minister.

Zahid was charged with committing the offences at a house in Country Heights, between June 2015 and October 2017, under Section 165 of the Penal Code which

carries a maximum jail term of two years or fine or both if found guilty.

The trial is being heard before Judge Datuk Mohd Yazid Mustafa, while Zahid is represented by Hisham Teh Poh Teik and Hamidi Mohd Noh.

This is the Umno president's second trial following the ongoing hearing at the Kuala Lumpur High Court in which he is facing 47 criminal breach of trust, corruption and money laundering charges involving tens of millions of ringgit belonging to Yayasan Akalbudi.

The trial continues.



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Technician remanded over bid to bribe cop

SHAH ALAM: A technician has been remanded for seven days from yesterday for allegedly offering more than RM100,000 to a police officer. The remand order was issued by magistrate Mohamad Redza Azhar Rezali following an application by the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC). According to a source from the MACC, the suspect, 36, was arrested at a petrol station in Bandar Sri Damansara at 9.30pm on Monday, where he was scheduled to meet the police officer to give the money to release his colleague who was arrested in a drug case. **Bernama**

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PIC BY ASWADI ALIAS



'PRIORITISE THE WILLING'

WITH over 30,000 no-shows for Covid-19 vaccinations in Kedah, Kelantan and Perak, and a mad scramble for AstraZeneca slots which left many frustrated yesterday, calls are being made for authorities to be more flexible and divert vaccines to those who want it first so more get vaccinated faster.

OTHER HIGHLIGHTS

- Fear of side effects one of the main factors behind vaccine no-shows
- Record 63 Covid-19 deaths yesterday, 12 Hari Raya sub-clusters

REPORTS ON PAGES 2, 3 & 4

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NEWS / Story of the day

VACCINATION RUSH

'NEW STRATEGY NEEDED FOR REGISTRATION'

Experts say plan must be in place to redistribute vaccines of those who skipped their appointments

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WHILE Malaysians are scrambling to secure a slot for the AstraZeneca vaccine, tens of thousands of people have failed to turn up for their jabs under the second phase of the National Covid-19 Immunisation Programme (NIP).

The current development had prompted health experts to make a fresh call for the government to re-strategise the NIP to enable more people who want to be vaccinated to receive their jabs faster, and avoid the issue of vaccine wastage.

More than 30,000 people had reportedly skipped their vaccination appointments in Kedah, Perak and Kelantan since last month.

Meanwhile, all slots for the second round of the AstraZeneca vaccine voluntary opt-in programme, which opened at 12.15pm yesterday, were snapped up within 90 minutes, leaving scores of people frustrated and fuming.

As of Tuesday, Malaysia had also recorded a boost in the number of registrants for Covid-19 vaccines, with more than 11 million people, or 45.6 per cent of the target population, under the NIP.

The tens and thousands of missed vaccine appointments could have been efficiently diverted to crisis areas, and used to inoculate high-risk individuals as well as those who want to be vaccinated faster, experts said.

Epidemiologist Professor Datuk Dr Awang Bulgiba Awang Mahmud said the current development was an indication for the government to start re-strategising the NIP and opt-in programme to ensure that the country was on track to achieving its herd immunity goal.

"The government really needs to re-strategise the vaccination programme. It needs to push for faster delivery of vaccines from the manufacturers."

"I would strongly suggest offering the AstraZeneca vaccine to those in the high-risk group as an option in MySejahtera. This should be done as aggressively as possible," he told the *New Straits Times*.

He said states in dire need of vaccination due to the high incidence rates, such as Selangor, required a more aggressive way of reaching out and vaccinating people, which could be done by permitting walk-ins for instance.

"In high incidence states, if registration and vaccination rates are slow, I would advocate going to community centres, registering people on the spot and vaccinating them on the spot for those who are fit and willing to do so."

"Some of these vaccines do not require ultra-cold storage, so this is quite possible," said the Science, Technology and Innovation Ministry's Covid-19 Epidemiological Analysis and Strategies Task Force chairman.

Dr Awang Bulgiba noted that there could be various reasons for registrants not turning up for their appointments, like not feeling well, being a person under investigation, being unable to travel or as a result of the negative publicity surrounding the AstraZeneca vaccine.

"The only way to establish this is by cross-checking with the PUI



database and by asking those no-shows themselves. This can be done via the MySejahtera app, or by calling them up or sending them a text message or an email."

Dr G. Jayakumar, professor of community and occupational medicine at Manipal University College Malaysia, said the authorities should relook the mechanism of registration.

Dedicated state Health Departments, he said, should be allowed to run their own vaccine registration portals under the purview of the federal authority.

Jayakumar said other avenues could also be utilised, such as post offices, places of worship, schools, malls and community centres to complement the online registration process.

He said prioritising the vaccination recipients was the way to go, especially for high-risk people, which included those above age 60, those in old folks homes, prisons, detention centres, frontline media personnel and students attached to hospitals for clinical training.

"There can be an in-built mechanism of a waiting period created, where a replacement may step in automatically once someone fails to turn up for their vaccination."

On the mad rush to register for the AstraZeneca vaccination and the ensuing system failure yesterday, he said better planning was needed considering the high number of applicants.

"The reliability of the registration system is of utmost importance. This type of platform must be given out to reliable and reputed website developers."



Professor Datuk Dr
Awang Bulgiba
Awang Mahmud



Dr G. Jayakumar

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Story of the day / NEWS 3



Siti Hajarat Mohd Kidam (left) and Zarian Mohd Kidam from Klang, feeling disappointed after failing to register for the second round of the AstraZeneca Covid-19 vaccination yesterday. PIC BY FAIZ ANUAR

Elderly skipping shots for fear of side effects

KOTA BARU: Many senior citizens who did not turn up for their vaccination under the second phase of the National Covid-19 Immunisation Programme (NIP) have cited the fear of side effects as the reason for skipping their appointments.

They were among the nearly 10,000 elderly and high-risk citizens who failed to turn up during the programme since its implementation, according to the state Health Department.

A housewife who only wanted to be known as Siti said she skipped her appointment at a vaccine delivery centre (PPV) in Tunjong near here as she was scared of the possible side effects after talking to her neighbours.

"My son helped me to register for the vaccination under MySejahtera last month. At that time, I was ready to be called for vaccination.

"However, in the days that followed, my neighbours told me how their daughter was down with a high fever after getting her jab.

"Because of this, I was scared and worried. So I decided not to proceed with the appointment," said the 79-year-old, who is a mother of six.

For odd-job worker Salleh Mohd Nor, 67, unverified stories of side effects had discouraged him from going for his appointment at the end of this month.

"My appointment is confirmed in Machang, but I have already made up my mind not to go.

"Apart from the journey to the PPV that may take an hour, I am scared of the side effects."

The father of six said his children were still trying to persuade him to go for his appointment, but he said it would be unlikely for him to change his mind.

Salleh who is from Lorong Che Majid here, said his 65-year-old wife had also expressed her wish to skip the vaccination.

On Monday, Kelantan Health director Datuk Dr Zaini Hussin said nearly 10,000 people, mostly those aged 60 and above, had failed to turn up to receive their

Covid-19 vaccination.

Yesterday, Kedah health director Dr Mohd Fikri Ujang said 10,827 people in the state had failed to show up between April 19 and last Saturday.

Similarly, 9,009 people, comprising those aged 60 and above, had also failed to turn up to receive their Covid-19 vaccination in Perak recently, said Perak Health Department director Datuk Dr Ding Lay Ming.

Meanwhile, Bernama reported Health Minister Datuk Seri Dr Adham Baba as saying that 935,865 individuals had completed taking two doses of vaccine up to Tuesday.

He said the five states with the highest number of people receiving both doses were Selangor (126,462), followed by Sarawak (92,261), Kuala Lumpur (90,514), Johor (83,728) and Perak (78,940).

A total of 11,069,418 individuals had registered for vaccination, with Selangor also recording the highest number at 2,916,443.

"The people are in a state of pandemic fatigue, and a segment of them are in despair while awaiting vaccination.

"Issues of this nature only aggravates the distress felt by the people in the time of Movement Control Order (MCO)."

Malaysian Public Health Physicians Association president Datuk Dr Zainal Ariffin Omar said it was imperative for the Special Committee on Covid-19 Vaccine Supply Access Guarantee (JKJAV) to re-strategise the NIP.

He suggested to emulate South Korea on how unused vaccines from people who did not show up for inoculations were utilised promptly and efficiently, and made available for anyone via online reservations.

"Currently, few vaccination centres have a stand-by or substitute list to replace those who default on their appointment."

Dr Zainal also said the re-strategising measures could also include putting the AstraZeneca vaccine back into the NIP and subsequently administered to those aged 60 and above.

And focus should be turned on those reluctant to get vaccinated, where greater awareness campaigns were needed to educate them on the importance of being inoculated.

"Millions have registered for vaccination. The high-risk group should be prioritised and if they reject the vaccine, it could then be passed down to younger individuals in need.

"We need to vaccinate as many people as fast as possible. Like Japan, we need to adopt the goal of one million shots a day. This is feasible if planned properly," said Dr Zainal.

Many frustrated trying to prove they are not robots

KUALA LUMPUR: All slots for the AstraZeneca Covid-19 vaccine for those aged 18 and above were taken up in less than 90 minutes after the registration for the second round of the programme opened at noon yesterday.

"Appointment bookings for the second round of the AstraZeneca Voluntary Vaccine Initiative is now closed. Those who are eligible will receive an appointment soon.

"Thank you for your interest in helping the nation achieve herd immunity," said the Special Committee on Covid-19 Vaccine Supply Access Guarantee (JKJAV) on its Twitter account yesterday.

The committee, however, made no mention of the number of slots that had been taken up.

In a separate tweet earlier, JKJAV said over 300,000 slots were booked in less than 40 minutes since the registration opened.

During the weekly press conference by the Covid-19 Immunisation Task Force on Tuesday, National Covid-19 Immunisation Programme (NIP) coordinating minister Khairy Jamaluddin said 1.26 million doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine would be utilised for the second round of the opt-in programme.

Khairy, who is science, technology and innovation minister, had also said 228,347 slots for the second round of vaccination had been booked by senior citizens up to Tuesday noon.

The registration, however, did



Muhammad Firdaus Adnan and his mum-in-law, Badariah Abu, smiling after registering for the second round of the AstraZeneca vaccination in Johor Baru yesterday. PIC BY NUR AISYAH MAZALAN

not occur smoothly.

Apart from the delay in the process, which began at 12.15pm instead of noon as planned, many applicants also ended up in frustration and disappointment after unsuccessfully trying to book their spot.

They included celebrity comedian Harith Iskander and former education minister Maszlee Malik, who took to their Twitter accounts to voice their frustration.

"After tekan (pressing) since 90 mins ago, I'm beginning to think I AM a robot," Harith said in referring to the "I am not a robot" checkbox on the website.

"Why does the website want to provoke me? I started first thing in the morning. You understand first thing (thing) in the morning? (Registering for family mem-

bers)," he added

Maszlee tweeted: "I can't believe I had to claim that I'm not a robot for nearly a thousand times today (yesterday)."

Another Twitter user, who identified herself as Dr Sherrini Ahmad, wrote: "I am a frontliner struggling to register my family members for your vaccine thus far. My failure to do so in the last ½ hour tells me how bad the system is). Fighting to get the vaccine like going on Boxing Day sale. Heartbreaking."

Kenneth Wong wrote: "The fact that everyone is scrambling for AZ does not mean the government is successful in raising awareness. It just means that the NIP has failed, being too slow and everyone is unsure how long it will take."

Another social media user named Wan Nur Syaira said: "It is not like people don't want to get vaccinated. They just can't..."

A netizen known as Ratul criticised the government for putting out an "incompetent website" to book the AstraZeneca slots.

"Thousands of people missed out on the chance to book their AZ 2.0 vaccine appointments because of the incompetent registration website. Will anyone clarify, why the submission and state buttons were not working? So many people just wasted so much of their time for nothing," he wrote.

Juliana Menon wrote: "Why can't I choose the date and location? Can @JKJAVMY please be more competent?"

The frustration over the technical glitches also prompted the Malaysian United Democratic Alliance (Muda) to question the website's efficiency.

Its secretary-general Amir Abd Hadi urged Khairy to reveal the individuals who received the contract to develop the website.

"After the website failed to meet the standard several times in facilitating the public to register for their vaccines, people have started questioning several issues, among others, the use of a free 'cloudflare'."

"Khairy must reveal who received the contract to develop this website. The people deserve to know," he said in a statement yesterday.

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Former 1Malaysia Development Bhd chief executive officer Mohd Hazem Abdul Rahman (right) arriving at the Kuala Lumpur Courts Complex on Tuesday. PIC BY FATHIL ASRI

CONSPIRACY

1MDB board put up a 'big charade' on the company's overseas funds

KUALA LUMPUR: The High Court was yesterday told that the board of directors of 1Malaysia Development Bhd (1MDB) had put up a "big sandiwara" (charade) about the company's overseas funds, which actually belonged to Umno, from official records.

This was revealed by former 1MDB chief executive officer Mohd Hazem Abdul Rahman during the trial of former prime minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak over the misappropriation of RM2.28 billion funds from 1MDB.

He said this when replying to questions by Najib's lawyer, Wan Aizuddin Wan Mohammed, on attempts to repatriate 1MDB funds purportedly invested overseas back to Malaysia in 2014.

Asked why he did not put on record about the funds belonging to Umno during a board meeting he attended on Feb 27, 2014, Hazem said that it was not supposed to be put on the record as it was a "scheme".

He also said that everyone on the board knew the real purpose of the money and whatever

recorded in the minutes of the board meeting that day was just for show.

Wan Aizuddin: Is there a reason why you said everyone (on the board) knew the money belonged to Umno and at one point you said everyone knew the real purpose of the money?

Hazem: Yes.

Wan Aizuddin: Why did you not put it on record that these funds belonged to Umno?

Hazem: This is a scheme, it shouldn't be put on record.

Wan Aizuddin: Now you are saying that this is a conspiracy that all the board members participated in?

Hazem: Yes.

Wan Aizuddin: So you are saying that whatever recorded in the minutes (of the board meeting) was just for show?

Hazem: They knew what was at stake.

Wan Aizuddin: Their (1MDB board members) instructions to the management to liquidate and bring back the funds is a "big sandiwara"?

Hazem: Yes.

On Sept 14 last year, Hazem testified that the real purpose of the establishment of 1MDB by Najib was to help Umno obtain funds through businesses involving 1MDB's strategic investment.

He said this was relayed to him by fugitive businessman Low Taek Jho, or Jho Low.

However, Hazem agreed with Wan Aizuddin that he had never heard this directly from Najib himself.

He said the basis of his belief that the 1MDB funds overseas belonged to Umno was because Jho Low and Najib's former principal private secretary, the late Datuk Azlin Alias, had told him so.

The trial before judge Collin Lawrence Sequerah continues on Monday.

Najib, 68, is facing 25 counts of abuse of power and money laundering involving RM2.28 billion of 1MDB funds, which were deposited into his accounts between 2011 and 2014.

He faces 20 years' jail and fine, if convicted.

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3-YEAR EXTENSION

WITNESS: ZAHID BREACHED PROTOCOL

Ex-ministry official testifies that Zahid granted contract extension without cabinet approval

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A WITNESS in Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi's corruption trial yesterday said the former home minister had breached the ministry's protocol when granting a contract extension to a private contractor.

Former Home Ministry (Immigration Affairs) deputy secretary Siti Jalilah Abd Manap, 49, said Zahid did not adhere to the ministry's protocol when he extended Ultra Kirana Sdn Bhd's (UKSB)

contract involving the Foreign Visa System (VLN) project.

Jalilah, who testified as the third prosecution witness, said Zahid penned a minute informing the ministry's secretary-general not to bring the matter to the Prime Minister's Office's public private partnership unit (UKAS) or the Cabinet.

UKAS is a central agency with the role of facilitating strategic partnerships between the public and private sectors, through the Public Private Partnership programme.

She said UKSB sent a letter dated Oct 17, 2016, asking the government to extend its contract to manage the VLN for six years before the expiry of its initial contract.

Jalilah said the agency then received a letter from the deputy prime minister's office dated June 16, 2017, titled Suggestion to extend VLN contract and E-Visa for another three years starting Oct 31, 2019 to Oct 31, 2022.

"In the letter, Zahid had minuted: Datuk Seri KSU, *sila sambung kontrak VLN/E-Visa sehingga tahun 2022 dan tidak perlu ke UKAS dan kabinet. Sila segerakan.* (Datuk Seri secretary-general, please extend the VLN/E-Visa contract until 2022 and no need to refer to UKAS and cabinet. Please expedite.)"

"Zahid's instructions were not in line with our protocol at that time."

"Due to this, I sent a letter to the UKAS director on June 19, 2017, on my own initiative to get a clear explanation from the agency."

Jalilah, who is now a secretary at the ministry's parole board, said the Immigration Affairs Division also drafted two additional agreements for the ministry's legal adviser's approval.

Deputy public prosecutor Wan

Shaharuddin Wan Ladin during the examination-in-chief asked the witness to explain the need of UKAS's involvement.

Shaharuddin: Why does this extension of contract need to be brought to UKAS?

Jalilah: Because it involves public money and the project is worth more than RM25 million.

The witness revealed that Zahid had also approved the company's contract extension to manage the one-stop centre (OSC) system in Malaysian consulate offices in China.

Meanwhile, the cross-examination by Zahid's defence team had to be postponed after the court was informed that one of the lawyers had come in "casual contact" with a Covid-19 positive person.

Counsel Hamidi Mohd Nor said

one of his colleague, Azman Abdul Rahman's MySejahtera status changed during the proceedings.

"Thus, I am urging the court to postpone the proceedings."

Judge Datuk Mohd Yazid Mustafa granted the defence's application and adjourned the proceedings to June 1.

Zahid, who is Bagan Datuk Member of Parliament, pleaded not guilty to 33 alternative charges of receiving S\$13.46 million from UKSB as an inducement to extend the company's contract as the operator of an OSC in China and the VLN system, as well as to maintain the agreement to supply VLN integrated system paraphernalia to the same company by the Home Ministry.

The Umno president is also facing another seven charges for accepting S\$1,150,000, RM3,000,000, €15,000 and \$15,000 in cash from the same company, which he knew had connection with his function as then home minister.

