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Azizah: Mara Corp governance under review

KUALA LUMPUR: Majlis Amanah Rakyat (Mara) has begun further investigations into Mara Corp to review relevant documents and ensure that the company's management is based on good governance. Chairman Datuk Seri Azizah Mohd Dun said Mara took a serious view of the unauthorised dissemination of internal administrative documents to the public, which has evoked a negative perception of Mara and its related subsidiaries. "Mara will never compromise or protect individuals involved in misconduct on the principle of upholding the value of integrity in carrying out the trust given." Azizah also denied allegations of abuse of power or mismanagement following an incident where internal documents of its subsidiary, which had gone viral, claimed that there were integrity issues involving some of their officers. **Bernama**

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DEVELOPMENT

92 PROBLEMATIC PROJECTS IDENTIFIED

Projects delayed for more than two months are categorised as 'projek sakit', says minister

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THE Implementation Coordination Unit (ICU) under the Prime Minister's Department has identified 92 "projek sakit" (problematic projects) nationwide.

Minister in the Prime Minister's Department (Economy) Datuk Seri Mustapa Mohamed said 22 of the projects were parked under the Education Ministry.

He said Sabah had the most number of problematic projects at 16.

"Any project with progress delayed for

more than two months is categorised as problematic.

"These projects are being monitored by the ICU.

"Problems include issues with contractors and consultants and project implementation issues such as coordination between clients and third parties," he said after the launch of the Chedok-Nibong bypass in Bukit Bunga here yesterday.

He said the government viewed the matter seriously and urged all stakeholders to work in a planned and integrated manner to ensure proper implementation of national development projects.

On the bypass project, Mustapa said the RM34.4 million project started in 2018 and was completed on Jan 31 this year.

"The 4.1km bypass will be fully operational on Feb 15 and is expected to benefit many road users, especially those heading to Penang and Kedah.

"The project will reduce traffic congestion in Bukit Bunga, especially during long holidays."

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NATIONAL SECURITY

Nation needs to be constantly vigilant

JUST when we thought we would never again see five-digit Covid-19 daily infection numbers, it is back with a vengeance. No thanks to the Omicron variant.

The government is pulling out all the stops to keep a lid on infections, and rightly so.

But as the government battles the onslaught of this unseen enemy that has caused untold damage to our public health and economy, we shouldn't let our guard down on other national threats.

The pandemic will blow over eventually, but other threats still loom, especially if we allow ourselves to be distracted. One matter is national defence, which if we ignore would be at our own peril.

Malaysia is a maritime state with a coastline measuring more than 6,037km and a sea area more than twice the size of our landmass.

We are geographically strategic, amid rising tension between the United States and China, both of which are seeking to expand their influence in this region.

Which brings me to the question: What will happen if Malaysia goes to war? We rely on only four combat ships, all older than 30 years, to defend our sovereignty.



Malaysia must rely on qualitative superiority rather than build an armada for our continued security. FILE PIC

With such odds, one must wonder if we have given those willing to die for us a fighting chance, if any chance at all.

In 2013, we were lucky that the Sulu insurgents were a ragtag bunch. But if we are forced to face a better funded, better equipped and more organised militia, we could live to regret our complacency and negligence, perhaps paying for our mistakes with the lives of our brave servicemen.

During the Sulu invasion, we know of at least 78 casualties from both sides and every life lost is one too many. For those who did survive, they live tormented by their experience.

I heard of a story relayed by a retired major from the Royal Medical Corps of

the army who recalls an event where a local family was caught in the crossfire when a fleeing insurgent hid in their home. Everyone died, except for one baby. That is just one story and there are many others like it.

These are horrifying memories, painful losses and mental traumas that will live on for a generation, keeping the fire of hatred and simmering conflict alive, each time taking us one step further away from long-term peace.

Some years back, the government announced plans to build littoral combat ships (LCS).

The LCS project was approved for a very specific purpose, which was to upgrade our naval capability and

deter foreign threats. Foreign threats come in various shapes and sizes, from pirates, to armed militants, to foreign coast guards and navies.

Without the financial resources to build an armada that could match the numerical strength of rival fleets, Malaysia must instead rely on qualitative superiority. The LCS offers this through its state-of-the-art technology, making its urgent delivery to the Royal Malaysian Navy essential for our continued security.

But as with many lucrative projects in the country, the LCS project has been tainted by allegations of corruption. As a result, the ambitious project has been delayed.

Failure to make clear policy decisions could cost lives.

Indonesia last week bought six of 52 Rafale fighter jets from France costing US\$8.1 billion. It is also set to buy 36 F-15ID fighters from the United States at US\$13.9 billion.

It is time we prioritise our defence by putting the money where our mouth is, by deterring conflict through qualitative superiority. Like battling Covid-19, we need to be on guard and ready. The nation's sovereignty is at stake.

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EXIT, ENTRY STAMPS

Immigration officer fined for failing to report bribes

KOTA KINABALU: An immigration officer was fined RM7,000 in default of three months' jail by the Special Corruption Court here yesterday for failing to report bribes totalling RM9,120 to the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC).

Judge Abu Bakar Manat meted out the sentence against Sapie Samsudin, 30, after he pleaded guilty to two charges.

On the first count, the court fined Sapie RM4,000 or two months' jail while on the second count, he received a RM3,000 fine or one month's imprisonment.

The first charge stated that Sapie, who worked as an Immigration officer (Grade KP19) at Bangunan Sultan Iskandar in Johor Baru, had received a bribe amounting to RM6,240 from Mohd Azril Azizan, which was deposited into Sapie's bank account.

The money was an inducement to get exit and entry stamps on a foreigner's passport without having to leave Malaysia.

The offence took place between May 10 and Dec 30, 2018 at a Maybank branch in the Semporna district.

On the second charge, Sapie received a RM2,880 bribe from the same man for the same purpose at the same place between March 22 and April 7, 2019.

Both charges under Section 25 (1) of the MACC Act 2009, were punishable under Section 25(2) of the same Act which provides a maximum fine of RM100,000 or a jail term up to 10 years or both upon conviction.

The accused was arrested on Nov 16, 2020. Investigations revealed that Sapie had failed to report the corruption activities to the MACC.

During mitigation, counsel Arthur Borine who represented the accused on behalf of counsel Samsuddin Sudirman, asked for leniency as Sapie was a first-time offender.

Arthur said Sapie, who has three children, was remanded for 13 days for which he regretted his actions.

MACC prosecuting officer Norsham Saharom, however, urged for an appropriate sentence as a lesson to the accused as well as to other civil servants and the public at large.

Sapie paid the fine.