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MALPRACTICE CLAIMS

MACC probes into alleged aid abuse

PUTRAJAYA: The Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) has started investigations into the alleged misappropriation of aid for the pandemic and floods last year.

Chief Commissioner Tan Seri Azam Baki said it had opened 25 investigation papers.

During the pandemic, he said there were claims of abuse of power and malpractice in the delivery of Covid-19 aid and the supply of medical protective equipment by enforcement officers.

"These purchases were said to have been made using government and public emergency funds, but some had failed to reach those in need.

"We have and will call up several complainants and witnesses."

He said this after the launch of a MACC training programme on boosting journalistic skills.

Among those likely to be questioned are former health minister Datuk Seri Dr Adham Baba.

Dr Adham was quoted as saying that there were many procurement processes that were carried out without paperwork due to last-minute demands.

The Public Accounts Committee had asked the auditor-general to look into government procurement and expenditure for medical services during the pandemic, subsequently getting MACC involved.

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ABUSE OF POWER

District council senior assistant accountant charged

KUALA TERENGGANU: A senior assistant accountant of a district council in Terengganu pleaded not guilty in the Sessions Court here yesterday to one count of abuse of power.

Sazawati Salleh, 49, made the plea after the charge was read out to her before judge Dazuki Ali.

The accused was charged with using her position as a senior assistant accountant in the Marang District Council for gratification by proposing a quotation from Edaran Sepakat Trading, which her husband indirectly had interests in.

The project worth RM10,640 is to carry out carpet installation in the office space and an officer's room at the Marang District Council's Finance Division.

The offence was allegedly committed on Jan 12 last year at the Marang District Council's Finance Division.

The charge, framed under Section 23(1) of the Malaysian Anti-



Sazawati Salleh (left) arriving at the Sessions Court in Kuala Terengganu yesterday.
BERNAMA PIC

Corruption Commission (MACC) Act 2009, is punishable under Section 24(1) of the same act.

It provides for imprisonment of up to 20 years and a fine of five

times the value of the gratification, or RM10,000, whichever is higher, if convicted.

Dazuki allowed bail at RM5,000 with one surety and ordered the

accused to surrender her passport to the MACC and to report to the MACC office every month.

The court set July 17 for mention. **Bernama**

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BUKIT JALIL NATIONAL STADIUM

'FIELD IN FRONT OF MY HOUSE LOOKS BETTER'

Water-logged pitch at stadium has netizens questioning management's upgrading work

LUQMAN HAKIM
KUALA LUMPUR
news@nst.com.my

VIDEOS of Bukit Jalil National Stadium personnel using dustpans and brooms to sweep away water from the football pitch before the AFC Asian Cup 2023 qualifier match between Malaysia and Bahrain on Saturday night have invited scorn and ridicule from fans.

The rain-soaked pitch, which left both teams having to lob the ball as it would become stuck in the water otherwise, have left many questioning the speedily

work at the national stadium.

Malaysia lost 1-2 to Bahrain. Twitter user @skumar176 said he was taken aback to see the water-logged pitch.

He said the main objective of the upgrading work was to improve the quality of the pitch as it could not be used on rainy days.

"After tonnes of money spent on upgrading work some time ago, we still have a 'Padang Banjir' at our national stadium."

Instagram user Alfayad was among the spectators who packed the national stadium on Saturday in anticipation of a fast-flowing game. He was instead treated to a choppy match.

"The condition of the field was bad, there was stagnant water due to an inefficient drainage system," he wrote.

Facebook user Azri also lamented how the millions of ringgit spent on upgrading had failed to produce the desired results.

popular sports in our country that get a lot of attention and funding. But after millions of ringgit spent on maintenance, our facilities and infrastructure are still in an embarrassing state.

"The question is, where did all the money go to?"

Instagram user Holydane said the match looked like it was played on a school field.

"It's really embarrassing. It looked as if the players were having a match on a school field. How are we supposed to win when there is no spirit to play on a pitch like this?"

Twitter user @dk_derick72 believed that it was time the people had a say on how projects were approved.

"It looks like every project has become exponentially expensive. I suggest that all projects and procurements by the government be evaluated and approved by a committee comprising the people"



A staff member of Bukit Jalil National Stadium using a broom to sweep away water from the football pitch before the AFC Asian Cup 2023 qualifier match between Malaysia and Bahrain on Saturday night. PIC BY ASWADI ALIAS

pulled no punches in slamming the pitch's condition.

"The field in front of my house is better than our national stadium."

Johor Crown Prince Tunku Ismail Sultan Ibrahim had, in March, agreed to sponsor "Zeon Zoysia" grass, as well as better drainage system for the Bukit Jalil National Stadium.

The "Zeon Zoysia" grass is the

dium, the homeground of the Johor Darul Ta'zim football team.

Sultan Ibrahim Stadium's technical team projected that it would take around four months to install a new pitch.

However, it is understood that the Bukit Jalil Stadium management had asked for the pitch re-laying work to start only in January as the stadium has been fully booked for events this whole

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PENANG UNDERSEA TUNNEL PROJECT GRAFT TRIAL

'FAKE INVOICES' HID MONEY TRAIL TO CM'

Witness tells court how bribes for Lim Guan Eng were covered up by project firm's owner

SHARANJIT SINGH
KUALA LUMPUR
news@nst.com.my

A FORMER top officer of the company which was awarded the RM6.3 billion Penang undersea tunnel project revealed yesterday at the Kuala Lumpur Sessions Court how the money trail from the bribes given to Lim Guan Eng on numerous occasions was covered up using fake invoices and payment vouchers.

Azli Adam, who was former senior vice-president at Consortium Zenith BUCG Sdn Bhd and was in charge of the company accounts, detailed how this started happening on the instructions of company owner, Datuk Zarul Ahmad Mohd Zulkifli.

The 58-year old outlined the chronology of events and modus operandi adopted by the company in the preparation of invoices and payment vouchers for the bribe money that was given to Guan Eng, the former Penang chief minister.

He said there were several payments made by companies under Zarul, namely Zenith Construction Sdn Bhd and Consortium Zenith BUCG Sdn Bhd, between 2012 and 2017.

He said money was withdrawn from these companies and he was then instructed by Zarul to pre-



Lim Guan Eng (third from left) speaking to Gobind Singh Deo (second from left) at the Jalan Duta Court Complex yesterday. PIC BY MOHAMAD SHAHRIL BADI SAAJI

pare dummy invoices and payment vouchers to dormant companies which he named as Sinar Bina Consultancy Services (SBCS), Bintang Ria Engineering (BRE), JKM Konsortium Sdn Bhd and Jurutera Konsult Maju Sdn Bhd.

However, he said Zarul had informed him that the cash was actually given to Guan Eng as a bribe and also to pay for his boss's personal debt.

He said the main source of revenue for the companies under Zarul at that time was payments he received from the land swap deal with the Penang government for Lots 702 and 713 in return for the tunnel project.

"Zarul told me and Ibrahim Sahari (another company director)

the truth after he was detained by the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission in January 2018.

"He confessed that he had actually used the money to bribe Guan Eng," he said, before confirming that all the entries and payments to SBCS and BRE concerning the so-called feasibility study and detailed design on proposed road and tunnel project were false.

He said both companies never had anything to do with the tunnel project.

"We obtained the dummy invoices from these companies by buying them off from a middleman for between RM10,000 and RM15,000," he said, adding that Zarul dealt with the other two companies himself to obtain

their invoices.

Azli later confirmed the fake payment vouchers which had been issued to the companies between 2012 and 2017 for their so-called consultancy fees.

He reiterated that Zarul had told him the money was actually given to Guan Eng as bribe payments.

"I am not sure of the exact dates the money was handed to him. As far as I remember Zarul said he made cash payments to Guan Eng."

Azli's testimony came in the wake of Zarul's evidence prior to this that he had personally handed bribes to Guan Eng after his company was awarded the tunnel project. Guan Eng's lawyers are expected to cross-examine Zarul

after this.

The cross-examination was supposed to start yesterday, but had to be deferred to another date as Zarul was unwell and could not attend court.

Guan Eng is facing four charges of using his position as the then chief minister to solicit gratification to help Zarul's company secure the tunnel project.

He is alleged to have sought 10 per cent of the profit to be made by the company from Zarul.

He is also accused of receiving RM3.3 million for himself and causing two plots of land belonging to the state government to be disposed off to two companies linked to the tunnel project.

The trial before Sessions Court judge Azura Aliwi continues.