

**CONTENT OF DAILY NEWS APRIL 2023**

BIL.	DATE	NEWS	PAGES
1.	06.04.2023	Charged Over Bribe Offer To Minister	3
2.	06.04.2023	Hamzah's Son Charged With Submitting False Documents	4
3.	08.04.2023	MACC Remands CEO, 2 Others Over Bribery	5
4.	09.04.2023	Extra RM35m To Empower PPR Communities	6
5.	09.04.2023	New Papar Hospital To Be Completed By Year End	7
6.	09.04.2023	STR A Great Help, Say Recipients	8
7.	11.04.2023	RM1.185m False Travel Claims: Ex-Perlis MB Charged	9
8.	11.04.2023	Enforcement Officer Nabbed Over RM7,000 Bribe	10
9.	11.04.2023	Theory Test For Vocational Driving Licence Scrapped	11
10.	12.04.2023	'Govt Committed To Easing Cost Of Living'	12
11.	12.04.2023	Ex-Perlis MB Azlan Man To Be Charged Again Today	13
12.	13.04.2023	RM11 Billion Belonging To Public Remains Unclaimed	14
13.	13.04.2023	Former Perlis MB Charged Again, This Time With Laundering RM1.06m	15
14.	13.04.2023	1MDB Suit : Hearing Begins Oct 16, 2024	16
15.	13.04.2023	Ex-Hulu Selangor Council Member Charged With Graft	17
16.	13.04.2023	Scammers Posing As Insurance Agent, Cop Get RM459,754 From Woman	18
17.	14.04.2023	Minister's Aide Nabbed	19
18.	14.04.2023	Ex-Political Aide Charged With Graft	20
19.	14.04.2023	May 26 Case Management For Prosecution's Appeal	21
20.	14.04.2023	Income Eligibility Limit For RMR Raised	22
21.	14.04.2023	'No Race Quota Set For Military Recruitment'	23

**NEWS PAPER CUTTING ON APRIL 2023**  
**NEWS STRAITS TIMES**

<b>BIL.</b>	<b>DATE</b>	<b>NEWS</b>	<b>PAGES</b>
22.	15.04.2023	MACC: Don't Blame Us	24
23.	15.04.2023	Ex-CEO Of Govt Tech Body Claims Trial To Graft	25
24.	15.04.2023	Wrongdoers Won't Be Protected In Crackdown On Graft	26
25.	15.04.2023	Joint Trial For Adam Radlan's 5 Graft Charges	27
26.	17.04.2023	MACC Records Minister's Statement Over Migrant Worker Requirement Agency	28
27.	18.04.2023	'MACC Netting More Big Fish'	29
28.	18.04.2023	'Graft Fight Success Due To Anwar'	30
29.	18.04.2023	Sivakumar Denies Report That MACC Raided His Home	31
30.	18.04.2023	Anwar: Minister Doesn't Need To Resign As He Is Not Charged	32
31.	19.04.2023	Federal Govt To Improv Grants, Financial Support For All States	33
32.	20.04.2023	Second Wind For Malaysia My Second Home	34-35
33.	20.04.2023	Stop Practising Double Standards, MACC Tells Critics	36-37
34.	20.04.2023	Govt To Review Strict MM2H Conditions	38
35.	20.04.2023	'Give MACC Time On Recruitment Probe'	39
36.	21.04.2023	MACC Arrests High Commission Officers	40-41
37.	24.04.2023	RM850 Million Lost In Online Cheating Cases Last Year, Says Centre	42
38.	28.04.2023	Fugees Rapper Guilty Of Laundering 1MDB Funds, Illegal Political Donations	43
39.	28.04.2023	LCS Project To Restart After New Deal Inked	44

6 APRIL 2023 | THURSDAY | PAGE: 7

SHARES AND CONCESSION

## CHARGED OVER BRIBE OFFER TO MINISTER

Businessman  
allegedly offered  
RM7.5 million in  
connection with  
Menara KL deal

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**A** COMPANY director was charged in the Sessions Court yesterday for offering RM7.5 million in bribes to a minister over the sale of shares and concessions of Menara Kuala Lumpur Sdn Bhd (Menara KL).

Hydroshoppe Sdn Bhd manag-

ing director Abdul Hamid Shaikh Abdul Razak Shaikh pleaded not guilty when the charges were read to him before judge Suzana Husin.

According to the charge sheet, the 49-year-old businessman allegedly offered RM500,000 per year for a 15-year period to Datuk Tan Ser Lay, 60, for the benefit of the then communications and multimedia minister Tan Sri Annuar Musa at the ministry's headquarters between July and August last year.

The money was an inducement for Annuar to approve the accused's company to handle the Menara KL acquisition process.

The offence falls under Section 16(b)(B) of the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) Act 2009 punishable under Section 24(1) of the same Act which

carries 20 years in prison and a fine of at least 10 times the amount of the bribe offered, or both.

The court set bail at RM50,000 with one surety and also ordered the accused to surrender his passport until the disposal of the case.

In a separate court, Hydroshoppe was also charged with the same offence involving the same individuals before Judge Rozina Ayob.

Hamid, who appeared on behalf of the company, also pleaded not guilty to the offence.

The offence falls under Section 17A(1)(a) of the MACC Act which carries a minimum fine of RM1 million or a maximum 20 years' imprisonment, upon conviction.

Deputy public prosecutor Mahadi Abdul Jumaat prosecuted and lawyer Shu Ivy appeared for



Hydroshoppe Sdn Bhd director Abdul Hamid Shaikh Abdul Razak Shaikh (centre) was yesterday charged in the Kuala Lumpur Sessions Court with offering bribes to the then communications and multimedia minister last year. BERNAMA PIC

the accused.

The court set June 2 for mention.

On Jan 7, two senior directors of a company with the title "Datuk" were remanded for four days to assist in the investigation related to the acquisition and takeover of

KL Tower.

The two were the managing director of the company who was allegedly involved in taking over Syarikat Menara KL and a businessman who is believed to be the "middleman" in the acquisition.

6 APRIL 2023 | THURSDAY | PAGE: 7

#### COOKING OIL

### Hamzah's son charged with submitting false documents

**SEREMBAN:** Two company directors, including the son of Bersatu secretary-general Datuk Seri Hamzah Zainuddin, were charged at the Sessions Court here with nine counts of submitting false documents and possessing cooking oil, which is a controlled item, over the allowed limit.

Muhammad Faisal Hamzah, 39, and Azizul Abdul Halim, 55, pleaded not guilty before judge Mazni Nawati after the charges were read by the court interpreter.

Faisal and Azizul, as directors of Rimba Merpati Sdn Bhd, which is a wholesale licence holder for a controlled item namely cooking oil, were accused of providing false information to the Domestic Trade and Cost of Living Ministry when submitting a document regarding the cooking oil in storage as provided under Section 8 of the Control of Supplies Act 1961.

They were alleged to have committed the offence about 5pm at

the ministry's office in Seremban 2 on Aug 12, 2022. They were charged under Section 8(4) of the Control of Supplies Act 1961 which is punishable under Section 22(2) of the same Act.

They were also charged with violating Regulation 9 (1) of the Control of Supplies Regulations 1974 for possessing a controlled item, namely cooking oil, over the 50 metric tonnes limit.

They were alleged to have committed the offence at 11.15pm at Rimba Merpati premises in Senawang on Aug 11, 2022.

They were charged with committing an offence that is punishable under Section 22(1) of the Control of Supplies Act 1961, read together with Section 22 (4) of the same Act and Section 34 of the Penal Code.

Deputy public prosecutor Mohd Sophian Zakaria did not offer bail but said that if the court were to grant bail, the amount should reflect the number of charges.



Former home minister Datuk Seri Hamzah Zainuddin's son Muhammad Faisal (right) is charged with submitting false documents and possessing cooking oil over the allowed limit.  
PIC BY AZRIUL EDHAM

He added that the case involved cooking oil, making it a public interest case.

Counsel Qurratu 'Aini Zafirah Mat Shuib, who represented both accused, urged the court not to be swayed by the number of charges as they have not been found guilty.

She said the bail should not be excessive as it could lead to injustice and against the principle of law.

"The accused have given full cooperation to the investigating officers and this is the first time that they have been charged in court.

"There is no risk of Faisal running away as he lives in Ampang with his pregnant wife and three children. Azizul is unemployed and has 10 children, including four who are still in school."

The court set bail at RM40,000 each and fixed June 7 for case mention and submission of documents.

8 APRIL 2023 | SATURDAY | PAGE: 10

ON REMAND UNTIL MONDAY

## MACC REMANDS CEO, 2 OTHERS OVER BRIBERY

GLC head allegedly received RM600,000 in bribes as reward for helping company obtain work tender

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THE Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) has remanded three people, including a government-linked company's chief executive officer, for allegedly soliciting and accepting bribes.

The bribes, amounting to about RM600,000, was to assist a company to obtain a tender related to mechanical and electrical system upgrade work, which are part of a RM15 million project to upgrade an office building in Jalan Am-

pang here.

According to a source, the three male suspects, aged between 39 and 54, were believed to have been arrested at the MACC headquarters about 6pm after giving their statements.

He said the first suspect, a 52-year-old chief executive officer, received bribes amounting to about RM600,000 from a company through the second and third suspect as a reward for helping the company to obtain the upgrading work tender for the building.

The three were brought to the magistrate's court in Putrajaya near here for a remand application yesterday.

Magistrate Irza Zuhakha issued a four-day remand order until Monday to facilitate investigations.

MACC senior director (special operation) Datuk Tan Kang Sal confirmed the arrest and said the three were being investigated under Section 17a of the MACC Act 2009.



The three male suspects, aged between 39 and 54, are believed to have been arrested at the MACC headquarters at 6pm after giving their statements. PIC COURTESY OF MALAYSIAN ANTI-CORRUPTION COMMISSION

9 APRIL 2023 | SUNDAY | PAGE: 4

## Extra RM35m to empower PPR communities

**SHAH ALAM:** Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim yesterday announced an additional allocation of RM35 million for a programme to empower communities in People's Housing Projects (PPR) in Selangor and Kuala Lumpur.

He said the move was expected to benefit 50,000 PPR residents through the "Kita Untuk Kita" (K2K) programme, involving about 12 housing projects that are identified as problematic.

"We have approved the RM35 million and it can be implemented immediately because there are houses in dire condition.

"I have also discussed with the Local Government Development Ministry to speed up the process by not following the usual tender, which takes a long time, but through limited tender," he said after the launch of the K2K Programme here.

Present were Selangor Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Amirudin Shari and Deputy Local Government Development Minister Akmal Nasrullah Mohd Nasir.

The K2K programme, among others, aims to build capacity and strengthen the role of the community to shoulder joint responsibilities in matters concerning building management and the environment in public housing areas.

In another development, Anwar said he would consider requests for early payment of April salaries to civil servants in preparation for the Hari Raya Aidilfitri celebration. **Bernama**



9 APRIL 2023 | SUNDAY | PAGE: 5



The new Papar Hospital was to have been completed in 2021. PIC BY MOHD ADAM ARININ

#### 'SICK' PROJECT

### New Papar Hospital to be completed by year end

**PAPAR:** The long-awaited new Papar Hospital will be completed by year end, Health Minister Dr Zaliha Mustafa said.

The construction of the four-storey hospital was announced in 2017, and it was to be completed by 2021.

However, it faced delays due to issues with contractors, as well as the impact of Covid-19.

"As a result, it was categorised as a 'sick project'," Dr Zaliha said after visiting the construction site here yesterday.

She said the project was at the 62 per cent stage, behind the targeted 70 per cent.

She also said the cost of the project had increased from the initial RM84 million due to rising material prices.

Dr Zaliha said it would take a few months to staff the hospital.

She added that there were 12 projects nationwide under the ministry categorised as "sick".

These include Papar Hospital, Beaufort Hospital, and Sikuati

health clinic in Kudat.

Earlier, Dr Zaliha visited the Luyang and Kinarut health clinics.

She is expected to visit Sabah Women and Children's Hospital in Likas.

Present during the visit to Papar Hospital were Sabah Sarawak Affairs Minister Datuk Armizan Mohd Ali, Sabah Community Development and People's Wellbeing Minister Datuk James Ratib, and State Health Director Datuk Dr Rose Nani Mudin.

9 APRIL 2023 | SUNDAY | PAGE: 9

# STR a great help, say recipients

TEH ATHIRA YUSOF  
AND NUR AQILAH ALIAS  
KAJANG  
BERSEKUTU.COM.MY

**W**ITH the rising cost of living, many people are worried about putting food on the table. Especially for those in the B40 category, the Sumbangan Tunai Rahmah (STR) has greatly helped families with their monthly food and groceries bill. Among the recipients of the aid was 67-year-old retiree Hew Soo Kiew, who came early to the Bank Simpanan Nasional (BSN) Kajang branch on Wednesday to cash out the STR.

Hew said the cash aid of RM100 for senior citizens would provide him additional funds to purchase food and groceries. "Since the prices are high, I allocated the cash aid for food and groceries. With this amount, I estimate that I can get a week's worth of groceries. The Klangang Baru Sungai Chua resident added that any form of cash aid from the government was welcomed for a retiree like him. "Right now it is just me and my wife so we do not need much, but obviously any kind of assistance is welcomed

**Phase 1  
RM1.67 billion**  
**Phase 2  
RM1.26 billion**  
**RM2.93 billion**  
Sumbangan Tunai Rahmah (STR) allocation to benefit 8.7 million in B40 category

Source: budget.majlis.gov.my/majlis

since we both are no longer working. "This is a good payout for us senior citizens and I thank the government for providing this aid for the elderly like me," he said. Similar to Hew, Mohd Hamidi Ahmad, 63, a retiree from Taman Mesra, Kajang, received the RM200 STR cash aid for his family. The father of six said it was helpful and allowed him to purchase essential items for his household. "Though it's only RM200, it still helps

me because having the aid is better than having nothing. You can buy quite a few items for RM200.

With that upcoming Hari Raya, my focus is more on festive items. Not clothes, but mostly preparation for the food to welcome my visiting family members during the Raya open house," he said.

Mohd Hamidi from Taman Mesra also said that the process of cashing out the STR was easy and smooth though he received priority access as a senior citizen. "For senior citizens, once you are inside the bank, you will immediately be given access to redeem the cash without the need for a queue number; unless there are many people present," he said.

He also said that it was good that the government provided the STR cash aid to help people who were financially burdened.

"I hope the government will consider allocating the cash aid as a monthly incentive if possible, because every little bit of help goes a long way for us," he said.

Another recipient was Muniamal Munisamy, 46, who said the payment would help her put meals on the table. "This is good. I can use the money to buy groceries and other items for the kitchen.

The STR phase two handouts started on Wednesday, involving a total sum of RM1.26 billion which was expected to be distributed to 8.7 million B40 recipients.



**Right now it is just me and my wife so we do not need much, but obviously any kind of assistance is welcomed since we both are no longer working.**

HEW SOO KIEW  
retiree



**I hope the government will consider allocating cash aid as a monthly incentive if possible, because every little bit of help goes a long way for us.**

MOHD HAMIDI AHMAD  
retiree



**Any aid from the government is good news for us and usually we will use it for urgent and essential needs only.**

MUNIAMAL MUNISAMY



**We are getting by fine and this money will be for her necessities, while we also try not to overspend every month.**

MOHD NAJIB HARUN  
self-employed

Recipients say the process of cashing out the STR was easy and smooth.



11 APRIL 2023 [TUESDAY] PAGE: 1 & 3

## RM1.185m false travel claims: Ex-Perlis MB charged

DATUK Seri Azlan Man allegedly made the claims between 2013 and 2017. He is expected to face money-laundering charges, too.

» REPORT ON PAGE 3



RM1.1 MILLION

## Ex-Perlis MB claims trial to submitting false travel claims

**KANGAR:** Former Perlis menteri Datuk Seri Azlan Man yesterday claimed trial at the Sessions Court here to five counts of submitting false travel claims worth RM1.185 million between 2013 and 2017.

Azlan, 65, made the plea when charges were read to him by a court interpreter before Judge Norsalha Hamzah.

He is alleged to have submitted false claims for accommodation and flight tickets to London, the United Kingdom, for five years.

He allegedly submitted false claims of RM230,230 to RM253,195 to the state government for five years despite not going on the trips.

As menteri besar, he was entitled to an annual paid holiday overseas.

For the first charge, Azlan is alleged to have used his position to submit an invoice from Sri Kedawang Travel & Tours (W) Sdn Bhd dated Dec 11, 2013 for flight tickets, hotel accommodation and transport for a trip to London between Dec 20, 2013 and Jan 2, 2014, amounting to RM230,230.

He allegedly committed the offence in December 2013 at the Perlis State Secretary Office at the Perlis State Legislative Assembly building here.

For the second charge, Azlan is alleged to have submitted a quotation for a return flight ticket to

London and hotel accommodation from Sri Kedawang Travel & Tours (W) Sdn Bhd dated Nov 20, 2014, a state government purchase order form with the order number L140050002274 dated Dec 5, 2014 and an invoice from Sri Kedawang Travel & Tours (W) Sdn Bhd dated Dec 17, 2014 totalling RM216,260 despite not making the trip.

He allegedly committed the offence between Nov 20 and Dec 18, 2014 at the same location.

For the third charge, Azlan is alleged to have submitted a quotation for a return flight ticket to London and hotel accommodation from Sri Kedawang Travel & Tours (W) Sdn Bhd dated Nov 26, 2015, a state government purchase order form with order number L150050001551 dated Dec 9, 2015 and an invoice from Sri Kedawang Travel & Tours (W) Sdn Bhd dated Dec 21, 2015, totalling RM241,295.40.

He allegedly committed the offence between Nov 30 and Dec 21, 2014 at the same location, with the intention to mislead the state government.

For the fourth charge, Azlan is alleged to have submitted a quotation for a return flight ticket to London and hotel accommodation from Aidil Travel & Tours Sdn Bhd dated Dec 14, 2016, a state government purchasing order form with order number L160050001435 dated Dec 19,



The prosecution told the Kangar Sessions Court that former Perlis menteri besar Datuk Seri Azlan Man is expected to be charged at the Kuala Lumpur Sessions Court this week under the Anti-Money Laundering, Anti-Terrorism Financing and Proceeds of Unlawful Activities Act. PIC BY SYAHARIM ABDIEN

2016 and an invoice from Aidil Travel & Tours Sdn Bhd dated Dec 29, 2016 for a trip to London between Dec 23, 2016 and Jan 1, 2017, totalling RM253,195.40.

He allegedly committed the offence between Nov 8 and Dec 29, 2016 at the state government building.

For the fifth charge, Azlan is alleged to have submitted a false quotation for a return flight ticket to London and hotel accommodation from Aidil Travel & Tours Sdn Bhd dated Nov 8, 2017, a state government purchasing order form with the order number 17ASPT0300790 dated Nov 17, 2017 and an invoice from Aidil Travel & Tours Sdn Bhd dated Nov 30, 2017 for a trip between Nov 23 and 30, 2017, totalling RM244,079.30.

He allegedly committed the offence between Oct 9 and Dec 14,

2017 at the same location.

All charges were framed under Section 18 of the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission Act 2009 for submitting or certifying a document containing false details.

The offences are punishable under Section 24(2) of the act, which carries up to 20 years' jail and a fine not less than five times the amount of the false claims.

Azlan was a picture of calm as the court interpreter read the charges to him.

He arrived at the court complex at 8.15am with former Kayang assemblyman Hamizan Hassan and his former press secretary, Saiful Daniel Mohd Yusof.

Deputy public prosecutor Ahmad Akram Gharib told the court the prosecution had no objection to the court offering bail to the accused.

He proposed that the court set

bail at RM50,000 with one surety.

He urged the court to order the accused to surrender his passport to the court pending the trial.

Azlan's lawyer, Burhanudeen Abdul Wahid, did not object to the bail amount suggested by the prosecution.

Akram told the court Azlan was expected to be charged at the Kuala Lumpur Sessions Court this week under the Anti-Money Laundering, Anti-Terrorism Financing and Proceeds of Unlawful Activities Act over proceeds that he allegedly gained from false claims.

He said the prosecution was also applying for the case to be transferred to the Kuala Lumpur Sessions Court to be heard together with the other case.

The court set bail at RM50,000 with one surety and set May 12 for case mention.

11 APRIL 2023 [TUESDAY] PAGE: 4



The accused was suspected of abetting another officer, who was detained and remanded on Saturday, to alter a report related to a drug test. PIC COURTESY OF THE MALAYSIAN ANTI-CORRUPTION COMMISSION

#### TAMPERING WITH REPORT

## Enforcement officer nabbed over RM7,000 bribe

**KUALA LUMPUR:** The Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) recently nabbed an enforcement officer for receiving a RM7,000 bribe to tamper with a chemical report.

Sources said the man, in his late 30s, was detained at the Kedah MACC headquarters on

Sunday at 3.30pm.

He was suspected of abetting another officer, who was detained and remanded on Saturday, to alter a report related to a drug test for a case to be reduced to Section 12(2) of the Dangerous Drugs Act 1952.

Magistrate Muhammad Zul

Hilmi Latif approved a six-day remand for the officer until April 15 to assist in the investigation.

Kedah MACC chief Rosley Mohamad Satar confirmed the arrest.

The case is being investigated under Section 16 (a)(B) of the MACC Act.

11 APRIL 2023 | TUESDAY | PAGE: 4



Transport Minister Anthony Loke says online theory classes can be done through platforms provided by the Road Transport Department (RTD), driving institutions or qualified RTD business intermediaries.  
PIC BY MOHD FADLI HAMZAH

#### PRACTICAL TEST STILL COMPULSORY

## Theory test for vocational driving licence scrapped

**PUTRAJAYA:** Those who want to get vocational driving licences no longer need to pass the theory test.

Transport Minister Anthony Loke yesterday said candidates would instead be required to attend online theory classes.

They would still need to pass their practical test, he added.

This will involve those seeking public service vehicle (PSV) as well as goods driving (GDL) licences.

Loke said this was one way to improve the licence procedure for the PSV and GDL.

"Candidates applying for PSV bus and GDL lorry licences must still go through and pass the practical test."

He said online classes could be done through platforms provided by the Road Transport Department (RTD), driving institutions or qualified RTD business intermediaries.

"Institutions and intermediaries must use teaching modules or syllabus for the vocational licence theory class set by RTD."

"RTD will set the conditions and regulations related to the qualification of the online platform and regulate theory classes to ensure the validity and integrity of candidates."

"Candidates' attendance data and information will be integrated with the MySikap system so that vocational licences can be

issued directly to them without requiring physical presence at the RTD counter."

Loke added that the syllabus for the theory class in all vocational licence categories would be reviewed and improved by RTD and the Malaysian Institute of Road Safety Research.

He said this was done by obtaining feedback from industry players to ensure the relevance of the syllabus.

"Improvements of the syllabus will be finalised in six months."

Following the announcement of the vehicle age limit for taxis and e-hailing being raised from 10 to 15 years effective Jan 1, Loke said those who wanted their vehicles to be licensed for those purposes could do so at least a year before their vehicles reach the age limit.

He said those with vehicles that had reached the age limit of 10 years must re-apply for the licence.

"The use of taxis and e-hailing is always subject to the approval of periodic inspections to ensure that only vehicles that comply with technical requirements and safety features are considered road-worthy."

"With the implementation of this new policy, I hope that the burden on taxi drivers and e-hailing can be eased, especially those who have been affected by the Covid-19 pandemic."

**Institutions and intermediaries must use teaching modules or syllabus for the vocational licence theory class set by RTD (the Road Transport Department).**



12 APRIL 2023 | WEDNESDAY | PAGE: 4

MALAYSIA MADANI

## 'GOVT COMMITTED TO EASING COST OF LIVING'

Initiatives like Menu Rahmah reduce the people's burden, help govt fight inflation, says Rafizi

KUALA LUMPUR

**T**HE government will continue to implement initiatives to ease the people's burden, especially in dealing with the cost of living.

Economy Minister Rafizi Ramli said the government implemented the Menu Rahmah initiative under the Payung Rahmah programme to help the poor.

He said the government implemented the People's Income Initiative (IPR) to eradicate poverty and improve the people's income through agricultural, food business and services operator initiatives.

"When more food items are sold at lower prices, whether through Menu Rahmah or IPR, it will create competition that will ease the prices of ready meals and, in turn, help the government curb inflation," he said recently.

For Ramadan, the government introduced Bazar Ramadan Rahmah under the Domestic Trade and Cost of Living Ministry's Payung Rahmah initiative at 38 locations nationwide.



Rafizi Ramli

Bazar Ramadan Rahmah was implemented with the cooperation of traders, who the ministry engaged with to ask them to offer food at Menu Rahmah prices to help reduce the cost of living.

Another initiative introduced to ease the people's burden is the Festive Season Maximum Price Control Scheme for the Chinese New Year celebration in January. It covered eight items, including pomfret, white shrimp, garlic from China, pork belly and lean and fatty pork.

This year, the government allocated RM200 million for the Price Standardisation Programme to ensure rural folk, especially those in the interior and islands, pay the same prices as city folk for seven essential goods — white rice, coarse sugar, flour, cooking oil, liquefied petroleum gas, RON95 petrol and diesel.

The programme has helped

more than 1.2 million residents in 798 rural areas in six states — Sabah, Sarawak, Kedah, Kelantan, Terengganu and Pahang.

Rafizi said Communications and Digital Minister Fahmi Fadzil introduced the Unity Package prepaid mobile Internet plan priced at RM30.

The initiative aims to provide Internet access to youths, the B40 group, senior citizens, disabled people and armed forces and police veterans.

Phase 1 of the Sumbangan Tunai Rahmah cash aid worth, totalling RM1.67 billion, had been channelled in stages to 8.7 million people in the B40 group since Jan 17.

"The inflation rate is expected to remain manageable at 2.8 per cent to 3.8 per cent this year amid more stable prospects."

"The government is committed to ensuring the national economy remains strong, resilient and sustainable to safeguard the people's wellbeing," Rafizi said.

He said efforts were focused on ensuring economic restructuring strategies and initiatives take into consideration the people's needs.

"This is to ensure the goal of becoming a high-income, inclusive and sustainable nation can be achieved, in line with the Malaysia Madani aspirations."

Malaysia's February headline inflation, as represented by the Consumer Price Index, remained moderate at 3.7 per cent, same as in January, after peaking at 4.7 per cent in August last year. **Bernama**

12 APRIL 2023 | WEDNESDAY | PAGE: 5

**'MONEY LAUNDERING'**

## Ex-Perlis MB Azlan Man to be charged again today

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Former Perlis menteri besar Datuk Seri Azlan Man will be charged again in the Sessions Court here today with five counts of money laundering.

Azlan, 64, will face charges under the Anti-Money Laundering, Anti-Terrorism Financing and Proceeds of Unlawful Activities Act (AMLATFPUAA) 2001.

The Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) yesterday said it had received permission to prosecute a former menteri besar today.

On Monday, Azlan pleaded not guilty in the Kangar Sessions Court to five counts of submitting false overseas travel claims worth more than RM1.18 million between 2013 and 2017.

Azlan was Pauh assemblyman from 2013 to 2018, before winning the Bintong state seat in 2018.

He lost the seat in the last gen-



*Datuk Seri Azlan Man*

eral election.

He was Perlis menteri besar from 2013 to 2022. He failed to defend his post as Kangar Umno division chief in the party's election recently. **Bernama**



13 APRIL 2023 | THURSDAY | PAGE: 1 & 2

## RM11 billion belonging to public remains unclaimed

» PAGE 2

UP TO LAST MONTH

## 'RM11 BILLION REMAINS UNCLAIMED BY PUBLIC'

Large portion of the money has been invested, interest used for the people, says Ahmad

PUTRAJAYA

**A**BOUT RM11 billion belonging to the public has been unclaimed up to last month, said Deputy Finance Minister Datuk Seri Ahmad Maslan.

He said the unclaimed amount was part of the RM14.1 billion received by the Accountant-General's Department from companies or firms in accordance with Section 8 of the Unclaimed Money Act 1965 (Act 370) between 1977 and last month.

Of the total, about RM3.2 billion, such as in savings accounts, insurance and deposits, had been refunded, he said.

"A large portion of the RM11 billion in unclaimed money has been invested by the government in fixed deposits in accordance with the Financial Procedure Act 1957, (and) the interest earned (from the fixed deposits) is accounted for in the Consolidated Revenue Account.

"We obtained RM250 million in interest from the fixed deposit and we used that money for the people," he said after a visit to Accountant-General's Department here yesterday.

Ahmad said unclaimed money was defined as money legally payable to the owner but remained unpaid for a period of more than one year, money standing to the credit of an account that had not been operated in whatever manner by the owner for a period of more than seven years and money to the credit of a trade account that remained dormant for a period of more than two years.

He urged owners of the unclaimed funds to claim their money by submitting an application through the eGUMIS portal, or at the Accountant-General's Department's counters nationwide, or by mail sent directly to the department's Unclaimed Money Management Division office here.

He said the eGUMIS portal,



Deputy Finance Minister Datuk Seri Ahmad Maslan speaking to the press after visiting the Accountant-General's Department in Putrajaya yesterday. He says the government is looking to amend the Unclaimed Money Act 1965. (BERNAMA PIC)

which was launched in 2020, received about 17.2 million visitors up to last month, with the number of registered users being almost 4.4 million.

"During the same period, 354,912 online claim applications were received and of that amount, RM199 million in claim amounts were processed."

He said the Accountant-General's Department was developing an eGUMIS mobile application, which was expected to be available for use in the fourth quarter of the year.

Ahmad said the government was looking to amend Act 370, reducing the period of transfer to the Consolidated Revenue Account from 15 years to 10 years, redefining unclaimed money according to Sections 8(a) and 8(c) of the act, and revising the amount of fines imposed on companies or firms for non-compliance.

"This act has not been amended for a long time," he said, adding that the government was expected to table the proposed amendments at the end of this year.

On another matter, Ahmad said 59,230 people had applied for the Employees Provident Fund's (EPF) Account 2 Support Facility since it was launched on April 7.

He said of the number, only 27,705 applicants qualified for the facility.

"Those unqualified were people below the age of 40. We have told the public that the facility is only meant for those aged 40 and above."

The EPF facility was aimed at helping members obtain personal loans from banking institutions.

Two banking institutions have taken part in the programme — MBSB Bank and Bank Simpanan Nasional.

The facility involves loans of up to RM50,000 (subject to the balance in the applicant's EPF Account 2) with a 10-year repayment period.

One of the criteria is that the applicant must have a minimum of RM3,000 in their EPF Account 2.

Ahmad said despite the government being strict about prohibiting any further EPF withdrawals, all members were still allowed to withdraw funds for housing, education, health, and protection plans, such as those related to chronic diseases, as well as RM3,000 to subsidise the cost of the hajj pilgrimage.

"We have never said there will no longer be any form of EPF withdrawals."

"People are still allowed to withdraw from EPF Account 2 for these five reasons. Withdrawals from Account 1 are not permitted as it is meant for retirement." Bernama

13 APRIL 2023 | THURSDAY | PAGE: 1 & 4

## Former Perlis MB charged again, this time with laundering RM1.06m

» PAGE 4

*Datuk Seri  
Azlan Man at  
the Kuala  
Lumpur  
Sessions Court  
yesterday,  
where he was  
charged with  
five counts of  
money  
laundering.*  
BERNAMA PIC



MORE THAN RM1 MILLION

## Ex-MB Azlan faces 5 money-laundering charges

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Former Perlis menteri besar Datuk Seri Azlan Man was charged with five counts of money laundering totalling RM1.06 million at the Sessions Court yesterday.

Azlan, 64, pleaded not guilty to all charges before Judge Azura Alwi. For the first charge, he allegedly received RM208,339.90, believed to be proceeds of illegal activities, from Sri Kedawang Travel & Tours Sdn Bhd via a cheque, into his Maybank account at the Jalan Tuanku Abdul Rahman branch on Feb 19, 2014.

For the second charge, Azlan is accused of receiving RM196,651, believed to be proceeds of illegal activities, from the same company at the same place on Feb 9, 2015. For the third charge, he is alleged to have received RM224,404.40 believed to be proceeds of illegal activities from the company at Putrajaya CIMB branch on Feb 2, 2016.

For the fourth charge, Azlan is alleged to have received RM222,811.95, believed to be proceeds of illegal activities, from Aidil Travel & Tours Sdn Bhd at the same place on April 3, 2017.

As for the fifth charge, the accused allegedly received RM207,468, believed to be pro-

ceeds of illegal activities, from one Abdul Rahim Halim on behalf of Aidil Travel & Tours Sdn Bhd at Sheraton Imperial Hotel on in December 2017.

The offences fall under Section 4(1)(b) of the Anti-Money Laundering, Anti-Terrorism Financing and Proceeds of Unlawful Activities Act 2001. Azlan faces up to 15 years' jail and a fine of at least five times the sum of laundered money or RM5 million, whichever is higher.

Deputy public prosecutor Ahmad Akram Gharib told the court that the offence was non-bailable, but he proposed RM50,000 bail with one surety.

Akram also said Azlan's passport had been surrendered to the Sessions Court in Kangar two days ago when he was charged with five counts of submitting false travel claims.

The prosecution said it would apply for Azlan's case in Perlis to be tried with his case here.

Azlan's lawyer, Burhanudeen Abdul Wahid, did not dispute the bail offered by the prosecution.

Azura set bail at RM50,000 with one surety and fixed June 9 for mention.

Azlan was menteri besar from 2013 to 2018.

13 APRIL 2023 | THURSDAY | PAGE: 7

CASE MANAGEMENT TODAY

## 1MDB SUIT: HEARING BEGINS OCT 16, 2024

Riza Aziz sued for  
alleged  
misappropriation of  
funds amounting to  
US\$250 million

KUALA LUMPUR

**T**HE hearing of a lawsuit filed by 1Malaysia Development Bhd (1MDB) and three of its subsidiaries against Riza Shahriz Abdul Aziz, the stepson of former prime minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak, for alleged misappropriation of funds amounting to US\$250 million for film production and purchase of real estate, will begin on

Oct 16 next year in the High Court here.

The three 1MDB subsidiaries are 1MDB Energy Holdings Limited, 1MDB Energy Limited and 1MDB Energy (Langat) Limited.

Lawyer Desmond Low Zhi Jie, representing Riza, also known as Riza Aziz, and his two companies, Red Granite Pictures Incorporated and Red Granite Capital Limited, said the trial had been set for Oct 16 to 18, 21 to 25, Oct 28 to Nov 1 and Nov 4, 2024.

"The hearing will be before judicial commissioner Datuk Raja Ahmad Mohzanuddin Shah Raja Mohzan," said the lawyer when contacted yesterday.

According to Low, today is set for case management.

On May 7, 2021, 1MDB and its three subsidiaries sued Riza Aziz and his two companies for al-

legedly receiving around US\$248 million in funds that they misused for their personal gain, including financing a film and purchasing various properties.

The plaintiffs are seeking a declaration that Riza Aziz is responsible for the misappropriated funds and are demanding repayment.

Riza Aziz and his two companies, in a statement of defence filed on Oct 25, 2021, claimed to have obtained the loan from the Saudi royal family or the International Petroleum Investment Company to produce several films in the United States.

He claimed that it was difficult for an unknown film producer to obtain bank loans and that had compelled him to seek funds from individuals or companies.

Bernama

13 APRIL 2023 | THURSDAY | PAGE: 7

CLAIMS TRIAL

## Ex-Hulu Selangor council member charged with graft

**KUALA LUMPUR:** A former Hulu Selangor district council member was charged with receiving a RM500 bribe to support the approval of an application for financial assistance by a social welfare organisation.

Murali Samee, 53, claimed trial, when the charge was read to him before Sessions Court judge Rozilah Salleh.

Murali allegedly received RM500 from a 67-year-old man as an incentive to support the approval of an application for financial assistance to buy books for religious and moral classes, amounting to RM2,000, for a social welfare organisation.

The former council member allegedly committed the offence at a bank in Kuala Kubu Baru on Sept 7, 2020.

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

It carries a maximum jail term of 20 years and a fine of not less than five times the amount of the bribe received or RM10,000, whichever is higher, upon conviction.

The prosecution requested for a bail of RM10,000 with one surety and two additional conditions, namely that Murali must hand over his international passport to the court and must report at the nearest MACC office on the first week of every month.

Rozilah set bail at RM8,000 with one surety and ordered the accused to surrender his international passport to the court and report to the nearest MACC office on the first week of every month.

The court then fixed May 10 for case management.



13 APRIL 2023 [THURSDAY] PAGE: 10

HOUSEWIFE VICTIM

## Scammers posing as insurance agent, cop get RM459,754 from woman

**KERIAN:** A housewife, 52, lost RM459,754 to scammers posing as an insurance agent and a policeman, who claimed that she had submitted false claims and was involved in extortion and illegal gambling.

State police chief Datuk Mohd Yusri Hassan Basri said the woman had lodged a report at the district police headquarters here on April 8.

"The incident happened in February when the victim received a call from the scammers, who claimed to be an insurance agent and policeman, saying that she had submitted false claims and was involved in extortion and illegal gambling.

"For 'investigation purposes', the woman was asked to disclose her account

information to the scammers," he said in a statement today.

Yusri said the woman realised that she was being scammed after sharing the matter with her family members.

"She immediately checked her bank account and realised that RM459,754 of her savings was gone," he said, adding that the case was being investigated under Section 420 of the Penal Code for cheating.

Yusri advised people to be wary of scams and that they could verify the scam calls by the contacting district police headquarters at 05-721 2222 or the Commercial Crime

Investigation Department's Scam Response Centre at 03-2610 1559 or the National Scam Response Centre at 997.



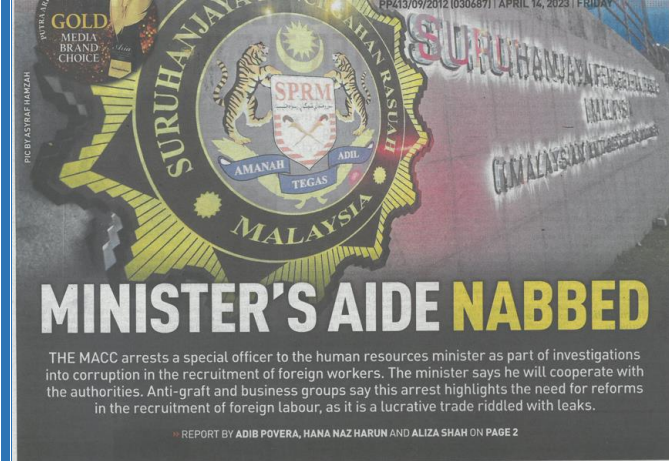
Datuk Mohd Yusri  
Hassan Basri



14 APRIL 2023 | FRIDAY | PAGE: 1 & 2

GOLD MEDIA BRAND CHOICE

PP413/07/2012 (030687) | APRIL 14, 2023 | FRIDAY



# MINISTER'S AIDE NABBED

THE MACC arrests a special officer to the human resources minister as part of investigations into corruption in the recruitment of foreign workers. The minister says he will cooperate with the authorities. Anti-graft and business groups say this arrest highlights the need for reforms in the recruitment of foreign labour, as it is a lucrative trade riddled with leaks.

REPORT BY ADIB POVERA, HANA NAZ HARUN AND ALIZA SHAH ON PAGE 2

CORRUPTION IN RECRUITMENT OF FOREIGN WORKERS

## 'MACC NEEDS TO GO AFTER THE BIG FISH'

Someone powerful must be behind this, says watchdog following arrest of minister's aide

ADIB POVERA AND HANA NAZ HARUN  
KUALA LUMPUR  
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**A**n anti-graft watchdog believes the arrest of two individuals, including a senior officer to Human Resources Minister V. Sivakumar, is just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to corruption in the recruitment of foreign workers into the country.

Transparency International Malaysia president Dr Muhammad Mohan is urging the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) to pursue the key players responsible.

"Arresting one or two small fry is not enough, and MACC needs to go after the 'big fish'.

"There must be someone who is very powerful behind this. If not, they could not have gotten away with it for quite some time.

"We must arrest them and get these people convicted," he told the *New Straits Times* yesterday.

MACC arrested one of Sivakumar's senior officers when they raided the ministry yesterday morning.

Its chief commissioner, Tan Sri Azam Baki, said MACC also arrested another individual to assist in the investigation into graft allegations involving a migrant worker recruitment agency.

It is learnt the duo were arrested for their involvement in setting up a migrant worker recruitment agency, despite the conflict of interest.

It is understood that the commission was focusing on the involvement of other individuals within the ministry and other related agencies.

"The senior officer to the minister and another person were detained to assist in the investigation over graft allegations involving a migrant worker recruitment agency," said Azam, adding that duo had been remanded for six days.

Muhammad said the arrests by MACC was a call to action for the government to plug the leakages involved in the process of recruiting foreign workers.

This, he said, was to prevent more people and groups from abusing the weaknesses for quick monetary gains.

"This is why it costs a lot to bring in foreign workers.

"At the end of the day, businesses are going to suffer because somebody has got to pay for it."

Malaysian Employers Federation president Datuk Dr Syed Hussain Syed Husman called for improvement in the foreign labour recruitment process.

He cited the process of recruiting foreign workers was a "lucrative business".

"That is why we have so many interested parties.

"One way to stop all this is to allow employers to directly recruit workers from the source country.

"Even if we have foreign worker recruitment agents, serious selection processes should be followed.

"A transparent fee structure should be established," he said, adding that the recent arrest by MACC was a wake-up call and will deter people from further abusing the system.

Association of Employment Agencies Malaysia vice-president Suresh Tan said employment agencies should not be blamed for corrupt practices, adding that people in power were only using agencies as a vehicle for their crimes.

"Do not put the blame on the agencies. It is the people in power who have access.

"They are misusing their power and using employment agencies as their vehicle," he said.

Tan, however, said it was too early to pass judgment on the matter, and people needed to wait until there was a detailed report from MACC.

"We need to know if the individuals involved facilitated approvals for several agencies, or it was their agency that was giving out the approval."

In an immediate reaction to yesterday's arrest, Sivakumar said the ministry will give its full cooperation to MACC.

He said he took note of the arrest of his senior officer, and as the matter was still under investigation, he would not be giving further comments on the issue.

"The ministry and I will give full cooperation to the investigating agency if needed.

"Therefore, I hope the media would not make any assumption or speculation that can affect any party until the investigation is completed."



Dr Muhammad Mohan

14 APRIL 2023 [FRIDAY] PAGE: 4

4

NEWS / Courts & Crime

12 CHARGES

## EX-POLITICAL AIDE CHARGED WITH GRAFT

Rosli Hasan, who was political secretary to the then Melaka CM Idris Haron, claims trial to receiving RM408,736 in bribes

### MELAKA

**A** FORMER political secretary of a former chief minister has been charged with receiving bribes amounting to RM408,736 to support a company's bid to be appointed the contractor for projects in 2017.

Datuk Rosli Hasan, who was political secretary to then chief minister Tan Sri Idris Haron, claimed trial when the 12 charges

were read to him before Sessions Court Judge Elesabet Paya Wan.

According to the first charge, he allegedly received a bribe from a man in the form of renovation services for a house belonging to his wife, Wan Ranazima Wan Abdul Rashid, at 24 Jalan Pokok Mangga 6A, Taman Pokok Mangga, worth RM323,736 between May 2017 and February 2018.

For the second to the 12th charge, he was accused of accept-

ing bribes amounting to RM85,000 through a credit card payment registered in his name from a man at a Batu Berendam bank branch, at different times and dates between May 22, 2017 and Oct 19, 2017.

The kickbacks were a reward to help Syarikat D'Azlamad be appointed as the contractor to design, build and complete a mosque, a multipurpose hall, three shoplots and a waste disposal shed in Lot 341 and Lot 345, Mukim Bachang, worth RM5.28 million.

The offence carries a maximum jail term of 20 years and a fine of not less than five times the amount of the bribe received, or RM10,000, whichever is higher,



Datuk Rosli Hasan (centre) arriving at the Sessions Court in Melaka yesterday. He allegedly received bribes amounting to RM408,736 to support a company's bid to be appointed the contractor for projects in 2017. PIC BY MEOR RIDUWAN MEOR AHMAD

upon conviction.

MACC deputy public prosecutor Irwan Shah Abdul Samat offered bail of RM80,000 for all charges with one surety with the additional condition that the accused submits his passport to the court and report to the MACC office once a month.

The accused's lawyer, Azrul Zulkifli Stork requested bail of RM30,000 as security and RM50,000 unsecured since the

accused was no longer working and was depending on a pension of RM2,018 a month to support his two wives and eight children, five of whom are in school.

The court allowed the accused to be released on bail of RM80,000 as requested by the lawyer with the additional condition of reporting to the Melaka MACC office once a month.

The case is set for mention on May 16.

14 APRIL 2023 | FRIDAY | PAGE: 4

## 1MDB AUDIT TAMPERING CASE

# May 26 case management for prosecution's appeal

**PUTRAJAYA:** The Court of Appeal has fixed May 26 for another case management for the prosecution's appeal against the acquittal of Datuk Seri Najib Razak and former 1Malaysia Development Bhd (1MDB) chief executive officer Arul Kanda Kandasamy in relation to the 1MDB audit tampering case.

Arul Kanda's lawyer, Jasmine Cheong, said another case management date was fixed as the records of appeal were not ready.

The first case management for the prosecution's appeal was conducted yesterday before Court of

Appeal deputy registrar Mohd Khairi Haron.

Apart from Cheong, lawyer Alastair Norman representing Najib and deputy public prosecutor Parvin Hameedah Natthiar, appearing for the prosecution, were also present.

On March 3, High Court judge Mohamed Zaini Mazlan (now Court of Appeal judge) acquitted and discharged Najib and Arul Kanda after finding that the prosecution had failed to prove a prima facie case against them.

Both were freed of the charges without their defence being called. **Bernama**



14 APRIL 2023 | FRIDAY | PAGE: 6

Local Government Development Minister Nga Kor Ming (second from right) handing over a Rumah Mesra Rakyat offer letter to an applicant in Putrajaya yesterday. BERNAMA PIC



**AFFORDABLE HOUSING SCHEME**

## INCOME ELIGIBILITY LIMIT FOR RMR RAISED

Those eligible can submit applications for units online, no more through agents, says Nga

**PUTRAJAYA**

**T**HE household income eligibility limit to apply for Rumah Mesra Rakyat (RMR) under Syarikat Perumahan Negara Bhd (SPNB) has been raised from RM3,000 per month to RM5,000 per month.

Local Government Development Minister Nga Kor Ming said this would open up more opportunities for the people to apply for the housing scheme.

"Applicants can submit their applications online via the SPNB website and no more through agents.

"The process will be done transparently, and there will be no more agents collecting fees," he said after the RMR offer letters and house keys handover ceremony here yesterday.

Nga said among RMR's new initiatives was the extension of the monthly instalment period from 16 to 25 years with a fixed rate of RM300. Applicants can choose six designs offered by SPNB and a layout that suits their lifestyle, such as maintaining a three-room design or changing it to two rooms.

"SPNB is also obtaining a quality standards certification from SIRIM that is recognised internationally."

Since 2002 until March this year, SPNB has completed 56,002 low-cost housing units nationwide.

Nga said that in the 2023 Budget, RM358 million had been set aside for SPNB to build 4,250 units of RMR this year at a starting cost of RM75,000 a unit.

Earlier, Nga handed over RMR offer letters and house keys to 40 recipients from Selangor, Perak, Melaka and Negri Sembilan.

He said the RMR initiative was to help those who did not own a house or lived in a worn-down house but owned land which can be developed to build a home.

Similar handing-over of offer letters ceremonies were held in the other states, where 180 recipients received their house keys yesterday.

"The government will ensure that it maintains the price of an RMR unit. A new applicant pays between a subsidised cost of RM55,000 to RM75,000 for a unit according to the respective categories."

Also present were SPNB chairman Datuk Husam Musa and ministry secretary-general Datuk M. Noor Azman Taib besides top management from SPNB.

Nga said SPNB continued to give its full commitment in ensuring the RMR and other housing initiatives projects benefitted the people as the wellbeing of Malaysians was a main pillar in the aspirations of Malaysia Madani.

14 APRIL 2023 IFRIDAYI PAGE: 6

LOW PERCENTAGE OF NON-BUMIPUTERAS

## 'No race quota set for military recruitment'

**KUALA LUMPUR:** The Malaysian Armed Forces have never set any racial quota for personnel recruitment, Defence Minister Datuk Seri Mohamad Hasan said.

He added that recruitment was carried out twice a year, involving the intake of 6,000 to 7,000 personnel.

"The percentage (of non-Bumiputeras) is very low in the armed forces.

"They see that there are other jobs that offer better returns, so it is not only because there are no retirement plans," he said after attending the 2023 Hari Raya Aidilfitri donation presentation at Wisma Pertahanan here yesterday, adding that there were many courses to prepare its personnel for retirement.

On the issue of low percentage of non-Bumiputeras joining the armed forces, he said plans were made to attract them, including online applications and roadshows throughout the country.

"It does seem the response is not encouraging. We don't want this to continue and hope that a career in the armed forces will be more attractive to all races."

On the procurement of the 155mm self-propelled howitzer to boost the army's firepower, he said the procurement process was cancelled, but the weaponry would still be purchased through an open tender.

"The cannon is needed by the army, especially the Artillery Corps, but we cancelled the procurement process as it was done through direct negotiation, so we need to use open tender.

"The procurement will be done to ensure it really follows the specifications needed by the armed forces."

Earlier, he presented 15,000 Hari Raya packs to armed forces personnel stationed at Malaysia's borders and waters, which would be distributed before the celebration.

"The donations are for personnel on duty during the celebration and who cannot be with their families," he said.

Chief of Defence Force General Tan Sri Affendi Buang, Chief of Air Force General Tan Sri Mohd Asghar Khan Goriman Khan and Chief of Navy Admiral Datuk Abdul Rahman Ayob were also present at the ceremony. **Bernama**




Defence Minister Datuk Seri Mohamad Hasan (third from right) attending the 2023 Hari Raya Aidilfitri donation presentation at Wisma Pertahanan in Kuala Lumpur yesterday. With him are Chief of Defence Force General Tan Sri Affendi Buang (second from left) and Deputy Defence Minister Adly Zahari (third from left). **BERNAMA PIC**



15 APRIL 2023 ISATURDAY| PAGE: 1 & 5



15 APRIL 2023 ISATURDAY PAGE: 1 & 10



**Ex-CEO of govt tech body claims trial to graft**

DATUK Mohamad Madani Sahari is accused of taking a bribe of RM5 million to help a company get the contract to run the Malaysia Automotive, Robotics & IoT Institute's upskilling programme.

FILE PIC

» REPORT ON PAGE 10

MORE CASES PENDING, SAYS DPP

## EX-MARII CEO MADANI FACES RM5M BRIBERY CHARGE

Accused pleads not guilty to receiving money as reward for enabling firm to win RM12m project.

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**F**ORMER Malaysia Automotive Robotics and IoT Institute (MARII) chief executive officer Datuk Mohamad Madani Sahari was charged at the Sessions Court here, yesterday morning, with one count of receiving a RM5 million bribe two years ago.

Madani, or his registered name Mohamad Madani Sahari, pleaded not guilty to the charge before

judge Rozilah Salleh.

The 56-year-old former officer was accused of receiving the funds from Kenny Khoo Chuan Wah, who acted on P. Kuhan Arunasalam's instruction.

The funds that were given to the accused were transferred into Norizan & Associates' Hong Leong Islamic Bank accounts as a reward to Madani for helping Aspire Knowledge Sdn Bhd to obtain the Letter of Award (LoA) worth RM12 million to run MARII's Employability and Re-Training Local Talent (ERT) Programme service provider.

The Letter of Award was obtained from A2Z Technology Sdn Bhd, which is MARII's subsidiary company.

Madani was accused of committing the offence at the Hong Leong Islamic Bank Shah Alam branch, here, on July 8, 2021.

His charge yesterday was framed under Section 16(a)(A) of the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) Act 2009, punishable under Section 24 of the same act which carries a maximum 20 years' imprisonment and a fine of not less than five times the amount of the bribe received or RM10,000, whichever

is higher, upon conviction.

Deputy public prosecutor Law Chin How proposed to the court for a RM300,000 bail on the accused, with one surety and to have his passport surrendered to the court. He said that the ac-

cused, who was represented by lawyer Rahmat Hazlan, had agreed to the terms. This was confirmed by the latter.

The DPP informed the court that the accused would be facing a few more charges in several courts soon and this was again confirmed by the accused's counsel.

The judge then ordered RM300,000 bail with one surety on the accused as well as to have him surrender his passport to the court. The court fixed June 8 for mention.

In March last year, MACC reportedly arrested 10 individuals including VIPs to assist in their investigation into misappropriation of MARII's project funds.

MACC Chief Commissioner Tan Sri Azam Baki was quoted in the same report to have confirmed that among those arrested were MARII's staff and top management.



Datuk Mohamad  
Madani Sahari

15 APRIL 2023 ISATURDAYI PAGE: 5

## CORRUPTION-FREE NATION

# Wrongdoers won't be protected in crackdown on graft


**KUALA LUMPUR:** The government has reiterated its commitment to fight graft as part of its efforts to rebuild Malaysia as a corruption-free nation.

Communications and Digital Minister Fahmi Fadzil said the arrest of several Human Resources Ministry officials by the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) on Thursday was proof of the unity government's resolve to "wipe out the scourge of corruption".

"Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim had even said that he would protect no one, if the ministers or staff are involved with corruption.

"If MACC (Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission) discovers proof of any wrongdoing, regardless of whoever is involved, then they will be brought to book," he told reporters after visiting ailing former Utusan Malaysia journalist Muhammad Basir Abu Bakar at his home yesterday.

Fahmi, who is the spokesman

 **All ministers have reminded their respective staff to be careful as people have high expectations of the civil service, and this government is committed to cleanse Malaysia of the scourge of corruption.**

**FAHMI FADZIL**  
Communications and Digital Minister

for the unity government to handle the media, said Anwar had on numerous occasions expressed

his anti-graft stance in his speech at the Prime Minister's Office monthly assembly.

"Let MACC carry out its investigations. If those arrested are brought to court, then we will adhere to the process.

"All ministers have reminded their respective staff to be careful as people have high expectations of the civil service, and this government is committed to cleanse Malaysia of the scourge of corruption," he said, reminding all against making any assumptions as the investigation was still ongoing.

It was reported that a senior officer to the Human Resources Minister V. Sivakumar was among those arrested to facilitate the investigation on graft allegations involving a migrant worker recruitment agency.

It was learnt that they were arrested for their involvement in setting up a migrant worker recruitment agency, despite the conflict of interest.



15 APRIL 2023 ISATURDAYI PAGE: 10

JANA WIBAWA SCANDAL

## Joint trial for Adam Radlan's 5 graft charges

**SHAH ALAM:** Businessman Adam Radlan Adam Muhammad's corruption cases in the Sessions Court, here, will be transferred to the Kuala Lumpur Sessions Court for a joint trial.

Judge Rozilah Salleh allowed deputy public prosecutors Maziah Mohaidee and Mohd Fadhly Mohd Zambray applications to be submitted in court here yesterday morning.

Maziah had previously applied for the case, which involved the 42-year-old accused of receiving RM2 million from Lian Tan Chuan, to be tried together with his other related case before Sessions Court judge Azura Alwi in the KL Sessions Court.

Meanwhile, Fadhly had applied for the case, involving the ac-



Businessman Adam Radlan Adam Muhammad (left) faces five corruption charges in relation to the Jana Wibawa programme that will be jointly heard at the Kuala Lumpur Sessions Court. FILE PIC

cused receiving a RM2.1 million bribe from the MIE Infrastructure and Energy Sdn Bhd managing director, to be heard together with Adam Radlan's case before Sessions Court judge Suzana Hussain.

The application was made as the cases here and the Jalan Duta courts were within one transaction that involved the same company and witnesses.

Adam Radlan's counsel Datuk Seri Rajan Navaratnam did not object to the application.

The court allowed the application and ordered for the accused's bail amounting to RM600,000 as well as his passport to be transferred to the Kuala

Lumpur Sessions Court.

Rozilah fixed May 29 for mention before the Sessions Court judge.

The Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia (Bersatu) Segambut deputy division chief is currently facing five charges related to the Jana Wibawa scandal.

On Feb 21, he was charged at the KL Sessions Court with two counts of soliciting and accepting a RM500,000 bribe.

The next day, Adam Radlan was charged at the Sessions Court, here, with accepting over RM4 million in bribes.

He was again charged at the KL Sessions Court, on Feb 28, with soliciting a RM2 million bribe.

17 APRIL 2023 IMONDAY! PAGE: 1 & 2

MACC records minister's statement  
over migrant worker recruitment agency

» PAGE 2



CONFLICT OF INTEREST

## SIVAKUMAR GIVES STATEMENT TO MACC

Minister called up to  
aid investigations  
into alleged graft in  
recruitment of  
migrant workers

MOHD ISKANDAR IBRAHIM  
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**T**HE Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) summoned Human Resources Minister V. Sivakumar yesterday to aid in its investigations into alleged corruption relating to the recruit-

ment of migrant workers.

A MACC source said the Batu Gajah member of parliament's statement was recorded at 10am.

However, the source did not disclose the location where his statement was taken. MACC Chief Commissioner Tan Sri Azam Baki could not be reached for comment.

It was reported that several people had been arrested over their involvement in setting up a migrant worker recruitment agency to obtain approval from the ministry, despite

a conflict of interest.

It is understood that the commission was focusing on the involvement of other people in the ministry and other agencies.

On April 13, the MACC arrested a senior officer to the minister to assist in investigations into the case.

Previously, it was reported that Sivakumar and his ministry would give full cooperation to the MACC regarding the arrest



V. Sivakumar.

of one of the ministry's officers involved in the foreign workers' recruitment case.



18 APRIL 2023 (TUESDAY) PAGE: 1 & 3



18 APRIL 2023 TUESDAY | PAGE: 1 & 3

NO ROADBLOCKS

## 'GRAFT FIGHT SUCCESS DUE TO ANWAR'

MACC will reveal more high-profile cases soon, says chief

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**T**HE latest Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) swoop on corrupt practices involving the recruitment of foreign workers, which has implicated the Human Resources Ministry, has sent shockwaves through the country.

The graft-buster says it is just the start of more to come.

Chief Commissioner Tan Sri Azam Baki said it was working on more corruption cases involving high-profile names and that everything would be exposed soon.

Speaking exclusively to the

*New Straits Times*, he said: "There will be high-profile cases exposed in one or two months."

Azam credited MACC's accomplishment to the support the tie commission received from Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

He said the MACC's job in fighting graft had been made easier as it had the full backing of the country's top leader.

Azam said there were no roadblocks placed whenever MACC pursued cases.

"When there is a drive and political will from the top, especially the prime minister, it makes my job easier."

"I don't have a headache. I can sleep at night."

"I can't sleep when people start interfering with my job and ask me why am I investigating this or that..."

He expressed confidence that the public would support the MACC in the fight against graft, especially when it involved those entrusted with public funds and carrying out government policies.

He said the MACC was an independent body that did not report to anyone, including the prime minister.

"Some people are against us... But out there, there are people from all segments of society involved in corruption."

"It is the MACC's duty to investigate... We will classify, we will decide and then we will execute."

"I am not going to refer to anybody to signal whether we should proceed with the investigation."

"Bad things will happen if you do that. Our responsibility is to investigate."

The MACC has been hitting the headlines following its investigation into high-profile cases involving politicians, including former prime minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin and top figures from his party, Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia, which are implicated in the Jana Wibawa scandal.

Last month, the Perikatan Nasional (PN) chairman was charged with money laundering, abuse of

power and corruption involving RM232.5 million in bribes from corporate entities linked to the Jana Wibawa programme.

Muhyiddin, 76, is said to have used his position as the then prime minister and Bersatu president to receive RM232.5 million in bribes between March 1, 2020 and Aug 20, 2021.

According to the charges, the money was deposited into Bersatu's bank accounts from three firms and an individual.

He is the second former prime minister to have criminal charges preferred against him, the first being Datuk Seri Najib Razak, who is in jail over the SRC International Sdn Bhd case.

Muhyiddin, who is Pagoh member of parliament, was an integral part of the Sheraton Move, which saw the Pakatan Harapan government collapse and the new coalition called PN taking over the government.

This manoeuvre led to him becoming the eighth prime minister and gained him the "Abah" moniker.

The co-founder of Bersatu has

claimed trial to the charges.

Others who have been charged with corruption related to the programme are former Bersatu information chief Datuk Wan Saiful Wan Jan and businessman-cum-Segambut Bersatu deputy chief Adam Radlan Adam Muhammad.

The MACC came under the spotlight again following its probe into the recruitment of the Human Resources Ministry's foreign workers programme.

It detained three people as part of the investigation.

Two of them are minister V. Sivakumar's officers.

He was called in to have his statement recorded on Sunday.

The MACC first arrested one of the senior officers, said to be a former DAP Socialist Youth leader, and a businessman, aged between 40 and 50, at Kuala Lumpur International Airport when they returned from Bangkok, Thailand.

This led to the arrest of another senior aide, a woman in her 50s.

**Additional reporting by Amalina Kamal**

18 APRIL 2023 (TUESDAY) PAGE: 3

RECRUITMENT AGENCY PROBE

## Sivakumar denies report that MACC raided his home

**PUTRAJAYA:** Human Resources Minister V. Sivakumar denied a news report that claimed his house was raided by the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission on Sunday.

When asked to clarify on the news report, he said: "No, no."

Sivakumar said this after attending the launch of the National Training Week at the Le Méridien Putrajaya here.

Citing a source, the report said it was understood that the search involved tracking money allegedly obtained by Sivakumar.

The source said the search was carried out by the MACC to obtain evidence as soon as the min-

ister's statement was taken earlier in the day.

When asked about his meeting with the MACC on Sunday, Sivakumar said he had left the investigations in its hands.

"Let them (MACC) do the investigation, (the case) is still in the process.

"We (my ministry and me) will give our full cooperation. (I'm) not arrested.

"I just (went to the MACC) for a

statement (to be recorded)."

Previously, the MACC arrested a senior officer to the minister and another person to assist in the investigations into allegations of corruption involving a migrant worker recruitment agency.

It was learnt the individuals were arrested for their involvement in setting up the agency, despite it being a conflict of interest.



Human Resources Minister V. Sivakumar (right) at the launch of the National Training Week in Putrajaya yesterday. PIC BY MOHD FADLI HAMZAH

18 APRIL 2023 TUESDAY | PAGE: 3

## Anwar: Minister doesn't need to resign as he is not charged

**KUALA LUMPUR:** There is no need for Human Resources Minister V. Sivakumar to resign after graft-busters arrested his senior officer over allegations of corruption.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said this was because Sivakumar had not been charged with anything.

"(For example) if, as the prime minister I am asked to explain (about anything to the authorities), I cannot be immediately stepping down.

"We have to differentiate between investigating (and being charged). The investigations are ongoing.

"I leave it to the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) (to conduct it)."

Anwar said this after launching the *Sayr Al-Salikin* and *Hikayat Iskandar Zulkarnain* books at Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka here.

The MACC had on Sunday summoned Sivakumar to have his statement recorded in connection with investigations into alleged corruption in his ministry relating to the recruitment of migrant workers.

Sivakumar's aide had been arrested recently in connection with the case.

Anwar said people should not make any assumption on the matter, and reiterated his stand against corruption.

"On the issue of governance and fighting corruption, we are firm. We do not care who we offend, who the person is or which party they belong to. That is our stand."

Earlier, Transport Minister Anthony Loke said Sivakumar had not been asked to take a leave of absence because the latter was not a suspect.

He said Sivakumar had extended his cooperation to MACC, and the DAP, of which the latter is a member, was monitoring the development of the MACC probe.

**On the issue of governance and fighting corruption, we are firm.**

**DATUK SERI ANWAR IBRAHIM**  
Prime minister



19 APRIL 2023 | WEDNESDAY | PAGE: 3

NATIONAL FINANCE COUNCIL

## Federal govt to improve grants, financial support for all states

**KUALA LUMPUR:** The government, through the National Finance Council, has agreed to improve grants and financial support for each state this year.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said this was decided during the council meeting he chaired in Putrajaya yesterday.

The meeting was also attended by all state menteris besar and chief ministers or their representatives.

Anwar, who is also finance minister, said the federal government had agreed to increase the Economic, Infrastructure and Welfare Development-Based Grants (Tahap) to RM400 million.

"Yesterday's meeting also agreed on the review and improvement of indicators and the distribution of Tahap grants."

He added that, as announced in the 2023 Budget, the council also agreed to increase the Ecological Fiscal Transfer allocation from RM70 million in 2022 to RM150 million as a special incentive to states that had gazetted new protected areas.

The government also agreed to improve allocations under the State Road Maintenance Grant to maintain roads and other related works in gated and guarded areas, as well as the replacement of road name signs and other road signs apart from direction indicators.

Anwar said state governments had been advised to prioritise Class G1 to G4 contractors in road

maintenance works in their states, and not just focus on large concession companies.

Another RM250 million will also be allocated for periodic maintenance of federal roads to deal with potholes, which he said were among the contributing factors to accidents.

"The federal government fully understands the importance and need for regular maintenance of federal roads so that their condition is always safe and comfortable for the people."


"This additional allocation will also be dedicated to benefit small Bumiputera contractors," said Anwar, adding that the additional sum would increase the overall allocation to RM1 billion from the RM750 million announced in the 2023 Budget.

To improve federal government loans to state governments, he said, the Finance Ministry had agreed to amend the disbursement method to progressive payments involving new loans for development projects under the Malaysia Plan's rolling plan.

This approach, he said, could speed up the process of channelling allocations provided in the form of loans, which would aid state governments with cash flow problems.

Anwar said the tax incentive package for state investments would also be extended for a transition period of two years until Dec 31, 2024.

20 APRIL 2023 | THURSDAY | PAGE: 1, 2 & 3



## SECOND WIND FOR MALAYSIA MY SECOND HOME

CONTROVERSIAL terms introduced in 2021 that all but paralysed the MM2H programme will be reviewed, says the Tourism, Arts and Culture Ministry. Also in the pipeline is a one-stop centre that will make life easier for applicants. Industry experts are elated, but expatriates say it will take a few years to undo the damage.

» REPORTS ON PAGE 2

## 'Easing requirements will attract more applicants'

**KUALA LUMPUR:** The government's decision to review the strict conditions for the Malaysia My Second Home (MM2H) programme will attract more applicants.

MM2H Consultants Association Malaysia president Anthony Liew said though the rigid rules had done some damage, it was not too late to change them to boost MM2H applications.

"We have been hoping the government will review certain requirements. I'm happy to see that some departments will compromise.

"For example, retirees hoping to apply for the MM2H will need to have a minimum of RM40,000 monthly offshore income.

"They are retirees, they won't still be active in the workforce," he told the *New Straits Times* yesterday.

He said most retirees had liquid assets, but not income, so the requirement was too high.

"For this category, they have liquid assets, but not income. So the condition should be lowered by half to RM20,000 per month.

"Otherwise, you would only be pushing them away."

Describing the current rules as "inflexible", Liew said the gov-



Many people have turned away from Malaysia and opted for neighbouring countries after the Malaysia My Second Home programme's conditions became stricter in 2021. FILE PIC

ernment should lower the minimum number of days MM2H visa holders stay in the country.

He said currently, MM2H visa holders must stay in Malaysia at least 90 days a year, which should be lowered to 30 days.

"The best would be to lower it to two weeks a year.

"When you set a requirement so high, many will become uninterested and you will lose them to

competitors such as Thailand, Cambodia and even Bali, Indonesia, when Malaysia was the pioneer of such a programme.

"Previous records from 2017 to 2019 show that an average of 5,000 applications were approved, but in the past year, it dropped significantly to only about 10 per cent of what it was before."

He proposed that the govern-

» Continued next page

20 APRIL 2023 | THURSDAY | PAGE: 1, 2 & 3

## Group hails decision to establish one-stop centre for MM2H applications

» From Page 2

ment review the minimum age for the programme, which was increased from 21 to 35.

He said many youth were involved in high-income industries, such as technology and artificial intelligence, so the government should consider lowering the minimum age for the programme to 25.

He supported the Tourism, Arts and Culture Ministry's decision to

establish a one-stop centre for MM2H applications, saying it was important for applicants or agents to be able to contact one point person.

"We support reviving the one-stop centre to handle the programme and one director to head it," Liew said.

"Otherwise, applicants have to go to the Immigration Department for applications and check with the Home Ministry regarding policies. And they are not

easy to reach."

MM2H hopefuls had expressed their dissatisfaction with the strict conditions and called for the terms to be eased.

On the MM2H Programme group on Facebook, Jeff McElroy said he was turned away from relocating permanently to Penang.

"Two significantly wealthy retirees were all ready to relocate permanently to Penang.

"Then we found out we had to demonstrate both significant as-

sets in the bank and significant monthly income.

"If you have one, you don't need the other.

"The architects of these new regulations set out to destroy the significant expat economy that supports Penang and KL.

"How sad. Now we look elsewhere. All are punished."

Ismail Yusop said it would take time for foreigners to trust the programme again.

"You need two to three years to

gain back the trust for MM2H.


"It's not easy to bring back the old system and trust."

Sweet Shams said there was still hope for those wanting to relocate to Malaysia.

"Let's not despair. There is still hope, otherwise they (the government) would not reconsider.

"A special plea has made the government relook at MM2H. We are grateful that at least all the pleas have alerted them." By Hana Naz Harun

20 APRIL 2023 | THURSDAY | PAGE: 1 & 3



**Stop practising  
double standards,  
MACC tells critics**

Tan Sri Azam Baki says the Malaysian Bar had at one time pushed the MACC's predecessor to investigate judges. So he is wondering why it is now tearing into the graft-busters for probing into a judge.

» REPORT BY ALIZA SYAH,  
IYLIA MARSYA ISKANDAR AND  
AMALINA KAMAL ON PAGE 3



20 APRIL 2023 | THURSDAY | PAGE: 1 & 3

INVESTIGATORY POWERS

## 'STOP PRACTISING DOUBLE STANDARDS'

Many asked MACC to probe into issues, but now say agency is overstepping its bounds, says chief

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**M**ALAYSIAN Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) Chief Commissioner Tan Sri Azam Baki said those criticising the commission's work should stop practising double standards. He said MACC critics should look back on how they had pushed for the graft-buster to investigate issues, including probing judges. He cited as an example the issues surrounding MACC's probe into former High Court judge Datuk Mohd Nazlan Mohd Ghazali who convicted and jailed former prime minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak for the misappropriation of SRC International Sdn Bhd funds.

He said the Malaysian Bar and other parties were at the forefront condemning the commission for initiating the probe.

He said not too long ago, the Bar had pushed for the commission, then known as the Anti-Corruption Agency (ACA), to investigate judges.

"Tell these people, the Bar Council or whoever they are, not to practise double standards."

"I still remember clearly that during my days in the ACA, they (the Bar) pushed for us to investigate judges. So why the about-turn now?"

"We didn't have the power then, either. Yet, we were once called

by the judiciary to investigate a superior court judge."

He declined to divulge details of the case.

The Bar had criticised the MACC for acting outside its scope of investigatory powers in the Nazlan issue, saying the probe breached judicial ethics.

Malaysian Bar president Karen Cheah had said the right body to investigate and decide on the ethical conduct of judges was the Judicial Ethics Committee established under the Judges' Ethics

Committee Act 2010.

MACC, she said, had no role to play in the matter.

Azam, however, said the probe into Nazlan was only launched after the commission received eight reports from the public.

"So, if we don't investigate, what should we do? You tell me. Should we throw them (reports) into the dustbin? Keep quiet?"

"The Federal Court had decided that MACC has the power to investigate, that was the conclusion of the judgment."

Azam said investigations into misconduct by civil servants were not unusual and that MACC had submitted more than 100,000 reports to department heads for follow-up action.

"Our investigations begin with corruption matters. If we discover other elements of misconduct, it is our duty to report them to the heads of department (HODs)."

Azam said in this case, MACC's duty ended as soon as the reports were submitted to the HODs.

"We would just suggest (an in-

vestigation). But it is up to the HODs whether they want to take any action. Our suggestion is not final."

He said HODs were compelled to form a committee to look into the investigation report.

"They must form a committee to look into it. If they say that there's no merit, for example, they can then close the case."

"It is the HODs' right to decide, not us. Our duty is done after the report is submitted." **Additional reporting by Amalina Kamal**



The Palace of Justice in Putrajaya. Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission Chief Commissioner Tan Sri Azam Baki (inset) says the Federal Court has decided that the agency 'has the power to investigate'. FILE PIC

20 APRIL 2023 | THURSDAY | PAGE: 2

MALAYSIA MY SECOND HOME

## GOVT TO REVIEW STRICT MM2H CONDITIONS

Application process to be made more flexible after change in 2021 led to 90pc drop in applications.

KUALA LUMPUR

THE government will review the strict conditions for the Malaysia My Second Home (MM2H) programme that have forced many who adopted the country as their second home to leave and led to a 90 per cent drop in applications.

The Tourism, Arts and Culture Ministry said the decision to review the controversial conditions introduced in 2021 was reached following a meeting between its minister, Datuk Seri Tiong King Sing, and Home Ministry secretary-general Datuk Ruji Ubi.

Tiong said the application process for the programme would be made more flexible.

He said both parties agreed that Tourism Malaysia would promote the programme and provide recommendations for applications via a filtering process through an MM2H one-stop centre.

The centre will help interested individuals process their applications and collate documents for submission to the Home Ministry or Immigration Department for the issuance of the MM2H pass.

In a statement issued yesterday, Tiong said his discussion with Ruji also touched on the proposal to provide visa on arrival to visitors from China and India to promote the growth of the tourism sector.

He said the proposal would be submitted to the cabinet soon for further action.

It was reported that the MM2H programme saw a 90 per cent drop in applications due to stricter conditions.

Reports said people looking for second homes were choosing neighbouring countries instead due to strict conditions set by the previous administration in 2021.

The conditions required applicants to have permanent savings of at least RM1 million and liquid assets of at least RM1.5 million.

Previously, they only needed savings of between RM300,000 and RM500,000. They must now also show an offshore income of at least RM40,000 a month.

Sultan of Johor Sultan Ibrahim Sultan Iskandar was among those who expressed hope that the government would review the conditions for the programme.

He had raised the issue during an audience with then prime minister Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob in 2021.

Sultan Ibrahim had said Johor was a key destination for foreign investors and among the main contributors to Malaysia's economic growth.

20 APRIL 2023 | THURSDAY | PAGE: 4

'DON'T SPECULATE'

## 'GIVE MACC TIME ON RECRUITMENT PROBE'

2 Human Resources Ministry officers  
still being investigated over foreign worker  
recruitment deals, says Azam

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**T**HE Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) has urged people to refrain from speculating on the investigation into corruption allegations involving foreign worker recruitment deals.

Chief Commissioner Tan Sri Azam Baki asked the public to give the agency time to complete its probe.

"MACC is conducting an investigation involving two Human Resources Ministry officers and they have been released from remand.

"MACC asks all parties to provide us time to complete the investigation and refrain from

speculating," he added.

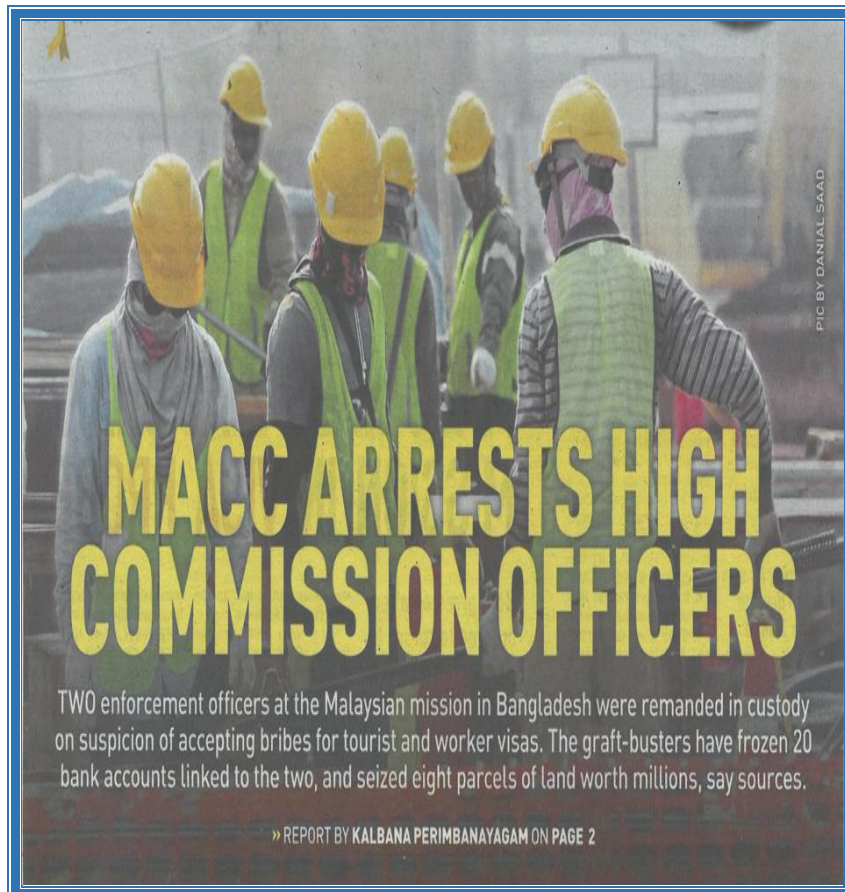
On April 13, two aides to Human Resources Minister V. Sivakumar were arrested together with a recruitment agent allegedly over quotas for recruiting foreign workers, which are under the purview of the ministry.

A day later, another suspect, identified as Sivakumar's female private secretary, was arrested by the MACC.

Sivakumar has suspended the trio and they have been released on remand on Monday.

On the same day, he denied news reports that the MACC had searched his office and home as part of its investigation.

21 APRIL 2023 | FRIDAY | PAGE: 1 & 2





21 APRIL 2023 | FRIDAY | PAGE: 1 & 2

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**MACC NABS 2 AT DHAKA MISSION IN VISA PROBE**

**ACCEPTING BRIBES**

Both arrested after ordered to return to KL as graft-busters freeze suspects' 20 bank accounts

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TWO enforcement officers attached to the Malaysian High Commission in Bangladesh have been arrested by the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission on suspicion of accepting bribes to facilitate overseas visa applications and entry of Bangladeshi tourists and workers into the country.

MACC has also frozen 20 bank accounts linked to the two — a man and a woman. In total, MACC has seized RM3.1 million in assets, including money in the bank accounts.

Sources said the two were ordered to return to Malaysia, where they were arrested. MACC obtained three-day remand orders against them until April 20.

Magistrate Izza Zulaikha Rohanuddin issued the remand order at the magistrate's court here on Tuesday.

Sources said MACC detected suspicious transactions in the suspects' bank accounts.

"As of today (yesterday), the freezing of accounts and seizure of movable/immovable property involves eight parcels of land estimated to be worth RM3.1 million," the sources said.

MACC Chief Commissioner Tan Sri Azam Baki confirmed the arrest and said the case was being investigated under Section 17(a) of the MACC Act 2009 and Section 4(1) of the Prevention of Money Laundering, Prevention of Terrorism Financing and Proceeds of Illegal Activities Act.

"I do not rule out the possibility of more individuals being arrested in due time."

Azam said MACC was also looking for one Siti Liyana Sakitan to facilitate investigations.

Sources said the 31-year-old could shed light on the case.

Siti Liyana's last known address is No. 51, Jalan Hjh Jamrah in Kampung Sri Desa, Ayer Hitam in Johor.

Those who know or have information on her are advised to contact investigating officer Jayaraj Rajan at 016-6371082 or email jayaraj@sprm.gov.my.

Recently, MACC arrested two senior aides of Human Resources Minister V. Sivakumar to facilitate investigations into the setting up of a company, in which they allegedly held interests, to bring in foreign workers.

Also arrested was a businessman who was said to have been in league with the senior officers.

However, it is unknown whether the arrests of the enforcement officers had anything to do with the earlier arrests.

Azam had told the *New Straits Times* in a recent exclusive interview that more arrests of corrupt "big fish" should be expected.

He had also hinted that more Human Resources Ministry officers could be arrested.

Azam had said MACC was being aided by the top levels of government, thanking in particular Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim for supporting the commission in its fight against corruption.

Sivakumar has been under pressure to take a leave of absence while the investigations were ongoing.

He himself had been called in by MACC to have his statement recorded, though he denied rumours that he was under investigation.

Anwar, however, had brushed aside calls for Sivakumar to go on leave, saying there was no need as the minister had not been charged with anything.

DAP secretary-general Anthony Loke also said it was unnecessary for Sivakumar to take leave.

Page 1 pic: Foreign workers at a construction site in a major city.

24 APRIL 2023 | MONDAY | PAGE: 1 & 6

## RM850 million lost in online cheating cases last year, says centre

» PAGE 6

SURGE IN CASES

# RM850M LOST TO ONLINE SCAMS IN 2022

Syndicates buying mule accounts for RM500 each to transfer money

PUTRAJAYA

**L**OSSES from online scams are reportedly running into millions of ringgit. Records show that more than 25,000 online cheating cases were recorded last year involving about RM850 million.

National Anti-Financial Crime Centre (NFFCC) director-general Datuk Seri Mustafar Ali said: "One factor causing scam syndicates to milk money from their victims is mule accounts 'bought' at RM500 per account from account holders to transfer money."

"A victim's money will be put into a mule account and transferred to other mule accounts before being withdrawn in a short period of time, making it difficult to track."

Account mules are those who hand over their automated teller machine cards and PIN numbers to others to be used in crimes.

Mustafar said the surge was also driven by the use of technology and social media in perpetrating scams as well as the leaking of user information.

He said scammers contacted victims through WhatsApp and



Datuk Seri Mustafar Ali

Telegram and impersonated contacts or the authorities through Facebook, Instagram, TikTok and other applications.

The latest tactic of scammers is to give a link disguised as a bank website or ask victims to download an application to secure a service.

"The victim will next be asked to disclose personal information, including banking particulars, allowing scammers to hack into the victims' account and steal their money."

Mustafar said online fraud cases were linked to victims' backgrounds, for example, Macau scams targeted those with large savings while e-commerce cheating involved buyers and sellers.

"Criminals use various tricks to get banking information from victims, and the situation becomes more complicated when victims are slow to realise that their money has disappeared."



The latest tactic of scammers is to give a link disguised as a bank website or ask victims to download an application to secure a service. FILE PIC

"The losses not only have a negative impact on the economy but can also cause social problems."

He said an analysis by enforcement agencies showed that fraud syndicates used phone numbers illegally obtained from parties selling consumers' information.

He said the government had taken measures to combat online crimes, including boosting cooperation with international authorities to ensure action could be taken against criminals who operate from abroad.

"Scams need to be dealt with by all parties, including victims."

"Awareness campaigns should be conducted from school to university levels."

He said the government intended to strengthen the National Scam Response Centre (NSRC) in terms of operations, manpower resources, centralised data systems, office infrastructure, technical equipment and financial analysis systems.

"Given that the NSRC operations pool the manpower and expertise of various agencies, including banking and telecommunications, an integrated enforcement action can be implemented."

"We can seize or restrict the

flow of proceeds of online crimes."

Mustafar said the government was examining legal provisions that could be used or amended to enable fraud money to be returned to victims.

Among the provisions being examined are the Anti-Money Laundering, Anti-Terrorism Financing and Proceeds of Unlawful Activities Act 2001, Penal Code and Criminal Procedure Code.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, when presenting the 2023 Budget, announced an allocation of RM10 million to boost the NSRC's role. **Bernama**

28 APRIL 2023 | FRIDAY | PAGE: 1 & 7

## Fugees rapper guilty of laundering 1MDB funds, illegal political donations

» PAGE 7

FACES UP TO 20 YEARS' JAIL

## RAPPER LINKED TO 1MDB CASE CONVICTED

Michel found guilty of illegal political donations, money laundering and others

WASHINGTON

**P**RAS Michel, a rapper in the 1990s hit trio The Fugees, was found guilty on Wednesday of helping funnel money from a billion-dollar Malaysia scam into United States politics.

After a trial that featured Hollywood star Leonardo DiCaprio as a witness, Michel was found guilty of illegal political donations, money laundering and related charges in the scandal engineered by flamboyant Malaysian financier Low Taek Jho.

In the early 2010s, Low, now a fugitive believed to be hiding in China, helped funnel billions of dollars stolen from a Malaysian state investment fund known as 1MDB into luxury US real estate, fine art, and Hollywood films like DiCaprio's *Wolf of Wall Street*.

Michel, whose real first name is Prakazrel, was accused of helping Low secretly funnel some of that money into then-president Barack Obama's 2012 re-election campaign via shell companies, hiding the donations' origins.

He was also accused of joining a clandestine lobbying effort with a senior Republican financier in 2017 to help the Chinese government secure the return of dissident billionaire Guo Wengui, who had close connections with president Donald Trump's political strategist Steve Bannon.

Guo has since been arrested himself, on allegations he defrauded investors.

Michel, 50, was found guilty on all 10 counts he was charged with. He faces up to 20 years in prison for the most severe counts in the case, the Justice Department said.

Besides money laundering and campaign finance violations, he was charged with acting as an unregistered agent for China, concealment and false record keeping, witness tampering, and false statements.

His case drew attention because of his star career turn with the Fugees in the 1990s, but also with DiCaprio's appearance in the Washington federal court in early April.

The 48-year-old star of *Wolf of Wall Street*, *Titanic* and other hit films testified for the prosecution about Low's wild spending sprees and lavish parties with other movie, music and TV stars, sometimes including Michel.

"I understood him to be a huge businessman with many different connections in Abu Dhabi, Malaysia... a sort of prodigy in the business world, incredibly successful," DiCaprio said about Low.

But the money had been looted with the support of top political figures in Malaysia from 1MDB, and Low spent some of it apparently hoping to buy political protection.

Low "mentioned in passing that he... was going to give a significant contribution to the Democratic Party," DiCaprio testified. "A significant sum, around 20 to 30 million dollars."

Michel helped Low funnel the donations through shell companies, breaking laws that make it illegal for foreign nationals to contribute money to US political campaigns.

"Michel played a central role in a wide-ranging conspiracy to improperly influence top government officials," said Harry Lidsky, a special agent of the Justice Department. **AFP**



Pras Michel

28 APRIL 2023 | FRIDAY | PAGE: 4

THREE MONTHS AFTER SIGNING

## LCS PROJECT TO RESTART AFTER NEW DEAL INKED

Sixth supplemental agreement prepared by Defence Ministry will involve changes to timeline, costs, says navy chief

LUMUT

THE littoral combat ship (LCS) reconstruction project is expected to begin three months after the sixth supplemental agreement is concluded, said Navy chief Admiral Datuk Abdul Rahman Ayob.

Abdul Rahman said the contract, which was being prepared by the Defence Ministry, would see several amendments to the timeline and costs.

"As we are aware, the cabinet meeting held on April 19 had agreed to continue the LCS project. This is an important decision to proceed further."

"If the agreement (contract) is finalised, we hope the LCS project will be able to start as early as possible," he said at a press conference after officiating at the Royal Malaysian Navy's ceremonial parade at its Lumut base here yesterday.

Earlier, Defence Minister Datuk Seri Mohamad Hasan said the LCS project would proceed and the first ship was expected to

operate in 2026.

The LCS project controversy came to a head when the Public Accounts Committee revealed that none of the ships had been completed even though the government had paid RM6.083 billion to Boustead Naval Shipyard Sdn Bhd.

Abdul Rahman said the supplemental agreement was expected to be finalised and signed at the Maritime and Aerospace Exhibition 2023 in Langkawi, which was scheduled to take place from May 23 to 27.

On the littoral mission ship (LMS) project, he said the priority was now on asset acquisition to replace the obsolete RMN vessels.

"At the moment, the main focus is procurement of LMS Batch 2

as approved in the 2023 Budget. "The assets received from the first batch did not meet standards."

"We expect the second batch to have better combat capabilities and we hope the procurement process will be finalised soon."

Bernama



Admiral Datuk  
Abdul Rahman  
Ayob