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GOLD MEDIA BRAND CHOICE  
LCS SCANDAL:  
VIPs TO BE QUESTIONED  
THE MACC makes it clear investigations into the troubled RM9 billion littoral combat ship programme are far from over. Chief Commissioner Tan Sri Azam Baki says prominent figures will be called in soon to have their statements recorded.  
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#### LITTORAL COMBAT SHIP PROJECT

# MACC TO CALL UP MORE PEOPLE OVER SCANDAL

Investigations carried out without fear or favour, says commission's chief

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**I**NVESTIGATIONS into the scandal surrounding the procurement of littoral combat ships (LCS) for the Royal Malaysian Navy will see more individuals summoned, including prominent figures.

Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) Chief Commissioner Tan Sri Azam Baki said these individuals would be called in soon to have their statements recorded.

"We will not hesitate to record statements of suspected individuals who are believed to be involved. Investigations are carried out without fear or favour despite their status as VIPs," Azam said after officiating at the MACC Officers' Basic Training Course passing-out parade at the state office complex here in Tampoi yesterday.

He said no one was exempt from the law.

"MACC will not exempt anyone or protect any involved party. More individuals are expected to provide us their statements, including those residing overseas," he said when asked to comment on Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim's statement that investigation into the LCS project must be continued.

Azam said investigations were ongoing to establish how funds of such a huge project were allegedly mismanaged.

He said the case was being investigated to establish where the funds for the project had gone to.

"The investigations are focused on determining where the funds had gone."

"Give us time to investigate and solve the case."

The RM9 billion LCS project is to procure six combat vessels as part of the RMN's modernisation programme.

The Defence Ministry, in December 2011, had awarded the contract to Boustead Naval Shipyard Sdn Bhd (BNS).

BNS, with the help of French naval company DCNS, was sup-



Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) Chief Commissioner Tan Sri Azam Baki (second from right) inspecting a guard of honour after officiating the MACC Officers' Basic Training Course passing-out parade in Johor Baru yesterday. PIC BY NUR AISHAH MAZLAN

posed to have started construction of the six vessels in 2015.

Under the terms of the contract, the first vessel was supposed to be delivered by April 2019, with the remaining five supplied in six-month intervals until 2023.

However, none of the ships were completed within the deadline.

A forensic audit report from July 2020 on the issue was declassified on Aug 22 last year, albeit with redacted information.

It suggested poor corporate governance and irregularities, which could lead to losses of up to RM890 million for the government.

The Public Accounts Committee (PAC) said the cost overruns for the project totalled RM1.4 billion, with RM400 million used to pay old debts from an older patrol vessel project.

Last August, former Boustead Heavy Industries Corp Bhd (BHIC) managing director Tan Sri Ahmad Ramli Mohd Nor was charged with three counts of criminal breach of trust totalling RM21 million over the scandal.

The 78-year-old former RMN chief, pleaded not guilty to the charges.

Ramli, in his capacity as the then BNS managing director, was alleged to have approved payments of RM13,541,140, RM1,360,716 and RM6,182,295 to three Singaporean companies without BNS board of directors' approval.

On Wednesday, Anwar said

MACC should continue its investigation into the project as too many problems and leakages had been discovered.

He said the prosecution done before did not involve the main culprits, and urged the graft-busters to find the real culprits.

On another matter, Azam was asked by reporters on Perikatan Nasional chairman Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin's challenge to MACC to investigate political funds received by Umno, PKR and DAP.

Azam said the commission was ready to investigate any political party leader if there were complaints and evidence of corruption.

"If any information is received, we will also look into that."

"For example, a party may not have any interest, is not ruling or has no power but if it makes a donation, it is not doing anything wrong in principle."

"According to our act (MACC Act 2009), if a person has power, comes from another party, if he receives any contribution from a person, but that person has interests with the government, then it is classified as a corruption offence that needs to be investigated by MACC."

"If there is evidence of corruption, we will investigate."

On developments regarding MACC's investigation into the Jana Wibawa programme, Azam said that investigations were underway, with two more investigation papers opened.

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TENDERS

# 'ONLY THE QUALIFIED WILL GET PROJECTS'

Contract bidders are anonymous when committee decides, says Anwar

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THE government will ensure all tenders, especially for major projects, will be awarded to bidders based on their track record and capabilities.

In his speech at the Real Estate and Housing Developers' Association's (Rehda) 50th anniversary dinner here on Wednesday night, Prime Minister Datuk Seri

Anwar Ibrahim recounted how the Tender Committee decided on a developer of a major project.

"I told them (the Tender Committee) to reach a decision and that the companies' name should not be made known.

"We kept to company A, B or C. And we made our decision not knowing who got the tender.

"We decided purely based on the track record and financial capabilities of the company," he said.

Anwar, however, did not iden-



Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim at the Real Estate and Housing Developers' Association's 50th anniversary dinner in Petaling Jaya on Wednesday night. PIC BY AZUDDIN SAAD

tify the major project to which he was referring.

"I believe that this is a good start for the country. This should be the guiding principles in awarding tenders

"Because I understand more than ever that corruption in the country is endemic if not systemic. It will take a lot of courage and conviction (to change the situation of the country).

"After going in and out of (the) Sungai Buloh (prison), I think I am blessed with some courage (in the effort to eradicate corruption)," he said.

"Only through growth that is convincing can we share the ben-

efit with the rakyat.

"That is why I proposed and espoused the Malaysia Madani concept, which is inclusive.

"Enough of racism, enough of religious bigotry, enough with leaders known to be able to squander effectively for themselves, their families and cronies," he said.

He later thanked Rehda for the role it played in developing the country.

"One of the pillars of any development is the construction sector and housing developers.

"You know that you have played a pivotal role (in developing the nation)."



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FULL COST FOR T20

# FINANCIAL AID FOR FIRST-TIME PILGRIMS

Tabung Haji sets aside RM400 million for B40, M40 subsidies

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**L**EMBAGA Tabung Haji (TH) has allocated more than RM400 million towards subsidising the cost of performing the haj for first-time pilgrims from

the B40 and M40 group.

This is, said TH executive director Datuk Seri Syed Saleh Syed Abdul Rahman, despite the cost of performing the haj having risen to RM30,850 this year from RM28,632 last year.

He said they would maintain the pilgrimage cost for the 'muassasah' pilgrims from the

B40 segment at RM10,980, the same as last year.

He said this was due to the government having agreed to subsidise RM1,000 per pilgrim for the haj season.

"Last year, the targeted haj payments had only involved two categories, namely the B40 and non-B40. This year, it will be split up into three, namely B40, M40 and T20.

"For the B40 group, the cost of the haj, after taking into account the 61 per cent financial aid, will come up to RM10,980.

"The M40 will receive 48 per cent in financial aid, meaning they only have to pay RM15,980.

"As for the T20, namely those who earn more than RM15,000 a month, have to pay the full cost which is RM30,850 per person."

Syed Saleh was speaking at a press conference on the cost and financial aid for the 2023 haj season at Menara TH here yesterday.

Also present were TH group managing director and chief executive officer Datuk Sri Amrin

Awaluddin, and general manager of haj management, Nurrin Anuwar Shamsuddin.

He said those who had appealed to perform the pilgrimage despite it not being their turn, would have to pay the full cost of RM30,850 per person.

On the selection criteria for the 31,600 pilgrims this year, he said TH would prioritise those who were unable to perform the haj in 2020 and 2021 due to the Covid-19 pandemic, followed by those scheduled to do their haj in 2022 and 2023.

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BIOMETRIC SECURITY SYSTEM PROJECT

# 'HOME MINISTRY WON'T MEDDLE IN MACC PROBE'

They may investigate any officer linked to RM596m sukuk funds case, says Saifuddin

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**T**HE Home Ministry will not intervene if the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) probes any of its officers over links to the misappropriation of sukuk funds worth RM596 million.

Home Minister Datuk Seri Saifuddin Nasution Ismail said the MACC was free to conduct any investigation as this was part of the commission's responsibility as graft busters.

"MACC should be given as much space as they need to fulfil

their responsibilities based on the law," he said after the 216th Police Day celebrations at the Kuala Lumpur police training centre here yesterday.

It was recently reported that the MACC was expected to haul up some ministry officers to assist in investigations.

This came after four individuals, aged between 40 and 55, were arrested for alleged involvement in the sukuk project meant to facilitate the registration and recruitment of foreign workers in the country under the biometric security system.

They were subsequently remanded on March 15 for three days.

A source told the *New Straits Times* that among those arrested were a chief financial officer, a company director and a shareholder of three companies that were directly involved in developing the new system.

It was reported that the sukuk funds were managed by a bank to finance the project, with all expenses and earnings passing through a special account.

However, the account was later changed to another account deliberately created so that repayment of principals and profits to sukuk holders could be avoided, causing losses of millions of ringgit.

It is understood that the MACC is looking into several ministry officers as this had to do with foreign workers, the acceptance of which falls under the ministry's purview.



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## No more Puspakom monopoly

ALL qualified parties may provide vehicle inspection services once Puspakom's concession ends in August next year. The Transport Ministry says this is to provide competitive services and make it easier for people to access the facility.

» REPORT BY DANIA NABILA ON PAGE 4



PIC BY ASWADI ALIAS

CONCESSION ENDS IN 2024

# GOVT TO END PUSPAKOM MONOPOLY

Private firms to be invited to offer vehicle inspection services next year

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**T**HE cabinet has decided to end Puspakom Sdn Bhd's monopoly and allow all qualified parties to provide vehicle inspection services after the agency's concession ends on Aug 31 next year.

Transport Minister Anthony Loke Siew Fook said the decision to do away with the monopoly was to create a competitive service environment and make it easier for people to deal with such tasks.

This was following public complaints about lack of efficiency as they have to spend hours waiting for their vehicles to be inspected and also due to the limited number of Puspakom branches in certain places.

He said the process of inviting private companies to offer this service was expected to begin in the first quarter of next year at the latest.

"This means that Puspakom will no longer be the sole provider of periodic vehicle inspection services for the Road Transport Department from Sept 1, 2024," he said at press conference at the ministry here yesterday.

Puspakom was appointed by the government in 1994 as Malaysia's first and only comprehensive national vehicle inspection company for mandatory inspec-

sections of commercial and private vehicles.

Loke said the decision to stop Puspakom's monopoly in periodic vehicle inspections had been discussed with the company, which is under DRB-Hicom.

"DRB and Puspakom are aware of the decision as we discussed it with them. There is no need for me to reveal details of the discussion, but they are aware."

This is the second monopoly to be stopped by the government after Touch 'n' Go.

He said Puspakom being the sole provider for such services left consumers without other options, and this was repeatedly highlighted in Parliament for many years.

"In 2018, when Pakatan Harapan was the federal government, we set up a committee to review all monopolies in the industry, but at that time, (Puspakom's) concession was still ongoing as it ends in 2024.

"As we are approaching the end of the concession, a decision had to be made.

"It was I brought it to the cabinet and it was agreed for the concession to continue without any exclusivity to Puspakom."

Loke said several conditions had been set for parties that will provide vehicle inspection services, and these rules will be similar to those imposed on Puspakom under the concession agreement.

The agreement included the responsibility to appoint employees who meet the prescribed qualification requirements, and to provide and use computerised inspection equipment regulated and approved by the RTD.

Loke said these parties must provide services in full compliance with the scope, standards

and procedures of motor inspection; charge an inspection fee rate that has been set; and to not allow the modifying of vehicles and sale of spare parts.

Any party found to be in violation of the rules will face penalties or may have their authorisation to conduct inspections revoked, he said.

Loke said Puspakom had been asked to make changes to the procedures and scope of periodic inspections to improve service standards.

These changes include advanced communication tools, sensors, and bag cameras that will enable users, the ministry and RTD to see inspections in real time online.

"Puspakom must raise the bar for employee competence by offering a system for human resource development training that is more efficient and pertinent to current needs.

"It must improve the booking process and customer complaints system, while setting up closed-circuit television cameras systems at all checkpoints for real-time control and monitoring.

"It is necessary to expand the scope of vehicle inspections, including interior, underbody, and motorbike inspections to raise the standard of technical safety and roadworthiness of vehicles, particularly those used for public transportation."

He said Puspakom must also take into account the equipment replacement process, development of new checkpoints, including "flagship centres", modifications to its key performance indicators for component audits, aspects of governance, level of service delivery, audit quality and penalties that will be imposed.

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CASE SETTLED?

# ROHANA RETURNED US\$10M

Ex-Astro CEO and former girlfriend of Tim Leissner gave 1MDB-linked assets to graft-busters last year

KUALA LUMPUR

**F**ORMER Astro chief executive officer Datuk Rohana Rozhan has returned US\$10 million in assets linked to the 1Malaysia Development Bhd (1MDB)

sovereign wealth fund.

The ex-girlfriend of former Goldman Sachs banker Tim Leissner returned the assets to the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) last year after graft busters completed their investigation into the case.

However, the MACC did not elaborate on how Rohana had returned the 1MDB-linked money, including unspecified assets.

Sources said assets returned by Rohana had been channelled to the government.

The MACC also considered the case as settled and its investigation against Rohana closed.

Minister in the Prime Minis-

ter's Department (Law and Institutional Reforms) Datuk Seri Azalina Othman Said, in a written reply in Parliament on Thursday, said that the Attorney-General's Chambers was unaware if Rohana had returned the US\$10 million.

Her reply was in response to a question from Lim Lip Eng (PH-Kepong) who had asked the prime minister to state if Rohana had returned 1MDB-linked money totalling US\$10 million to the government.

He had also asked how many of the 1MDB-related assets had been returned to the government.

In April last year, it was reported that the MACC was still investigating the case involving Rohana in connection with the money she allegedly received from Leissner.

It was also reported that the MACC had frozen Rohana's bank accounts and assets, and that the graft busters were seeking to repatriate the money and assets from her.

Rohana's link to the 1MDB funds emerged after she was accused of receiving US\$10 million, which she was said to have used to purchase a house in London.

In the US trial of former Gold-



Datuk Rohana Rozhan

man Sachs banker Roger Ng, Leissner testified that he bought Rohana a US\$10 million house in London after she threatened him over the 1MDB scandal.



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## City council vows no cover-up in probe

**KUALA LUMPUR:** The Petaling Jaya City Council has vowed that there would be no cover-up in the investigations involving its enforcement officers who allegedly roughed up an elderly man during a dog-catching operation.

"We want to stress that there will be no compromise in this case or (attempts) to protect any council staff if it is true and proven that they had committed the offence.

"We have also set up an internal investigation committee to probe the incident and it is ongoing," it said in a statement yesterday.

Meanwhile, Petaling Jaya member of parliament Lee Chean Chung has issued a letter to the city council's Integrity Unit demanding an explanation on the case.

The letter, among other things, demanded that the city council explain its standard operating

procedures (SOP) on dog-catching operations.

"If there are SOP, what were they?

What are the SOP used by the city council when conducting dog-catching operations? This includes the procedures used in this particular operation.

"We hope a detailed investigation will be conducted by the unit, and we do not want such an incident to recur," he said.

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RIGHT TO CHOOSE

# 'END FOOD, MEDICINE MONOPOLIES'

Experts say this will increase competition, reduce prices and boost people's welfare

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EXPERTS believe the government should break monopolies in industries that have a direct impact on the cost of living and the people's livelihoods, such as the food and medicine sectors.

The call came on the heels of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim's announcement that the government would review all monopolies to protect the welfare of the people.

Federation of Malaysian Consumers Associations secretary-general Datuk Dr Paul Selva Raj singled out the food and medicine sectors, where the existence of monopolies and cartels was acknowledged in a recent study by the Malaysian Competition Commission (MyCC).

"In a number of market surveys by MyCC, they found that monopolies and cartels were manipulating prices in the food and medicine sectors.

"We hope the government can start breaking up monopolies in the food sector. When we liberalise the food sector, food prices will go down.

"Monopolies have a negative impact on consumers' welfare. Monopolies block opportunities for new entrepreneurs to explore the market.

"By liberalising the market, consumers will be given options and the right to choose. It may also help the government reduce the prices of goods instead of depending on subsidies."

He did not provide examples of companies that have monopolies in the food sector.

Anwar's announcement on ending monopolies came a day after the Transport Ministry announced it would allow all qualified parties to provide vehicle inspections from Sept 1 next year, ending Puspakom's monopoly.

On Tuesday, the government announced that five highways nationwide would begin implement-



The Puspakom centre in Wangsa Maju, Kuala Lumpur. The Transport Ministry says it will allow qualified parties to provide vehicle inspections from Sept 1 next year, ending Puspakom's monopoly. PIC BY ASWADI ALIAS

ing an open-payment system by September. The announcement came after Anwar hinted that the Touch 'n Go monopoly would be reviewed.

In July last year, Anwar, who was then opposition leader, slammed the government extending the concession period of Padiberas Nasional Bhd, which he said had a monopoly of rice imports.

"Why continue the monopoly policy to give the rich a profit when we are talking about efforts to reduce people's burden?" Anwar had said in the Dewan Rakyat.

Centre for Market Education chief executive officer Dr Carmelo Ferlito said ending monopolies would benefit consumers.

"It will boost competition, benefit consumers and create a more vibrant economy. It will also boost confidence in domestic and international investors," said the senior fellow at the Institute for Democracy and Economic Affairs.

He said natural monopolies occurred due to peculiar conditions in certain industries where the leading corporation had the merit, while government-induced monopolies occurred when firms were appointed by the administration, giving them a dominant position in the sector.

"In this second instance, we need to do whatever it takes to dismantle the conditions (government protection) that led to that monopoly."

Transparency International-Malaysia president Dr Muham-

mad Mohan said the government's move to end government-induced monopolies would ensure improved services for the people at a lower cost.

"By removing monopolies, there will be greater transparency. Everyone is on a level-playing field and they have to compete.

"Corruption is an added cost of doing business, but without monopolies, corruption can be reduced or even eliminated when there is transparency and strict competition."

Economist Associate Professor Aimi Zulhazmi Abdul Rashid said dismantling monopolies should be done on a case-by-case basis.

"If a monopoly provides cheap, good and reliable services to the people, opening it up to new players would not be a priority.

"However, companies that deliver poor service or products and are in conflict with the public must be immediately reviewed.

"I wouldn't say all trades must be open to competition.

"Huge capital investment is needed to compete with existing and leading players," said the economic analyst at Universiti Kuala Lumpur's Business School.

He said the government's move to dismantle monopolies that did not benefit the people was a step in the right direction and would spur the country's productivity and economy.

"For Malaysia to prosper, there must be open and fair competition to boost productivity."



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ENDING MONOPOLIES

## GOVT WANTS LEVEL PLAYING FIELD

Study on monopolies, adjustments will allow fair competition among Bumi firms too, says PM



FARRAH NAZ  
KARIM

JEDDAH

**P**UTRAJAYA will be reviewing all current monopolies in an effort to provide a competitive and level playing field for everyone involved.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said all ministries had been asked to study existing monopolies under their purview in the spirit of promoting transparent economic development and fair competition.

"This requires us to make some adjustments, and a shift from a system I consider to be chaotic, obsolete, and that serves only vested interests."

"What is the rationale behind the decision to grant monopolies?"

"All ministries have been asked to conduct a review, to ensure that the public are given better service at competitive prices."

Anwar said the government was not reneging on its commitment to assist Bumiputera companies.

He said such initiatives must not only be transparent and fair, but also allow for fair competition among Bumiputera businesses.

"If our concern is to protect the interests of the Bumiputera, then make it very clear and transparent, and let them compete," he said at a media conference at the end of his three-day official visit to Saudi Arabia.

The prime minister was asked on the announcement by Putrajaya that it would end the decades-old monopoly of Puspakom — the sole company appointed by the government to conduct mandatory inspections on both commercial and private vehicles — next year. Puspakom was established in 1994.



A motorist paying toll with a Touch 'n Go (TnG) card. Last Monday, the government said it would review TnG monopolies. FILE PIC

Last week, Anwar, who is finance minister, said the government would be reviewing all monopolies held by Touch 'n Go (TnG) since 1997.

He said that there had not been any significant improvements in its services since its inception.

"TnG has been in operation for around two decades, but there has not been any convincing progress," he was quoted as saying.

Meanwhile, the prime minister said Malaysia's relentless campaign to stem corruption and promote transparency had paved a clearer path for the country in attracting foreign investments.

Anwar, who had been engaging with the global business community during his foreign visits since assuming the premiership in November, said they were encouraged by the stability that is now in place in Malaysia.

Anwar said the country's captains of industry had said that they were pleased with the developments in Malaysia and were looking forward to visit the country in May to look at investment opportunities.

The Islamic Development Bank (ISDB), Jeddah Chamber of Commerce and Industry, as well as leaders of the Saudi business

community represented in the National Business Chambers of Commerce, were among those committed to doing business in Malaysia.

"They were pleased with the political developments in Malaysia. This was what they had been waiting for."

"They know Malaysia very well, as they have been here since the 1980s and 90s. They have been waiting for stability; a clear direction and commitment to ensure the ease of doing business, end corruption, and for good governance."

"This would immensely benefit not only the people, but also the investing community," he said, adding that among the areas they were keen on included food security, oil and gas, as well as tourism and the services industry.

Anwar said the political stability was reinforced by the commitment of the three pillars of *kerajaan perpaduan* (unity government) — Pakatan Harapan, Barisan Nasional, and Gabungan Parti Sarawak.

"The fact remains that the government is certainly stable. And in no uncertain terms, will the parties renege on their commitment to ensure stability," said Anwar.

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Datuk Dr Asyraf Wajdi Dusuki

#### MAINTAINING INTEGRITY

## Mara plans to have MACC officers seconded to it

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Majlis Amanah Rakyat (Mara) is studying a proposal to get Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) officers to be seconded to it.

Mara chairman Datuk Dr Asyraf Wajdi Dusuki said this reflected the agency's commit-

ment in maintaining integrity, transparency and good management.

Asyraf Wajdi said he had discussed the proposal with Mara council member Tan Sri Muhammad Ibrahim.

"The proposal will be discussed

when the (Mara) council convenes next week (this week).

"This demonstrates our commitment to ensuring integrity and good management.

"Mara has a bigger agenda (in its efforts to maintain integrity and transparency), but we need

to lay down the foundation," he said after breaking fast with the media hosted by Mara on Friday.

Present was The New Straits Times Press (M) Bhd group managing editor Datuk Ahmad Zaini Kamaruzzaman.

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NO COMPROMISE

# IMMIGRATION TO AID MACC IN CASE INVOLVING 5 OFFICERS

D-G gives his assurance dept will be transparent in people-smuggling case

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**T**HE Immigration Department will extend its cooperation to the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) in a case involving five of its officers arrested for alleged involvement in people smuggling.

Department director-general Datuk Ruslin Jusoh yesterday said that apart from providing the department's cooperation, it would also be transparent in the matter to ensure that the graft-buster's investigations would be conducted thoroughly.

Ruslin said he would not compromise with officers who violated the department's integrity or tarnished its image.

He said it would not protect officers found to be involved in such activity.

He said the department would not discount the possibility of dismissing them if they were guilty of the offence.

"The department views this matter seriously. It remains committed to maintaining the in-

tegrity of its personnel."

Last Thursday, nine people, including five Immigration officers, were detained by MACC to facilitate investigations into a syndicate that smuggled illegal migrants into the peninsula from Sabah.

Five Immigration officers, aged between 41 and 30, comprising three women and two men who were on duty at Tawau Airport, were arrested during MACC's Op Lancar.

The remaining four people, who are civilians suspected of being the syndicate's agents, were detained at Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KLIA) and around Tawau on the same day.

Ruslin said the department had held programmes to instil values like integrity in officers.

He said the department always cooperated with agencies, including the MACC, to curb human smuggling.

Meanwhile, the MACC said the syndicate's modus operandi was to charge illegal migrants or those without valid documents about RM2,500 per head for passage to leave Sabah via Tawau Airport to KLIA using other persons' identities.

The migrants would be given boarding passes based on names stated in the MyKad given to them.

Once they arrived at KLIA, they would be met by enforcement officers who had been paid to let them through, thus enabling them to pass through the Immigration checkpoint without problems, it said.



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The infographic features a central green Khazanah logo. Surrounding it are four logos with arrows pointing towards the center: Kumpulan Wang Amanah Negara (top left), PERKESO (bottom left), Lembaga Tabung Angkatan Tentera (top right), and KWAP (bottom right). A 'BRAND CHOICE' award logo is in the top right corner.

## HOW TO SUPERCHARGE KHAZANAH

AN economist says the underperforming sovereign wealth fund must reassess strategies that are rooted in past priorities. He advocates merging it with other funds to create a RM500-billion behemoth to 'plug the nation's pension gap'. But another expert thinks this is not the right time for drastic changes.

» REPORT BY ZURAIMI ABDULLAH AND AZANIS SHAHILA AMAN ON PAGE 19

# 'KHAZANAH SHOULD REVIEW STRATEGY'

Economist: Privatised 'out-of-date' assets to raise money for reinvestment in key areas

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**K**HANANAH Nasional Bhd seems to be stuck with "past priorities" and "out-of-date" assets of the old economy that have passed their prime, according to an economist.

Hence, the country's sovereign wealth fund should review its portfolio and privatise some "out-of-date" assets to raise money for reinvestment in key areas, said Dr Geoffrey Williams of Malaysia University of Science and Technology.

He said Khazanah could redefine its purpose from a development fund to a pension fund and take on other underperforming public funds to create a new Malaysian superfund to plug the pensions gap.

"In other countries, a sovereign wealth fund is a pension fund with this exact aim. Combine the underperforming (public) funds with Khazanah — it will be a

Malaysian superfund with) more than RM500 billion," he said on Khazanah's subdued performance over the years.

Williams has been calling for a merger of government social security schemes, pension bodies and unclaimed assets to form a "superfund" to provide retirees at the bottom of the income heap with a monthly pension of about RM2,000 each.

This would include Social Security Organisation (Perkeso), Retirement Fund Inc (KWAP), the armed forces pension fund (LTAT), the national trust fund (KWAN) and unclaimed assets of deceased people.

Williams said Khazanah had in the past achieved its long-term aims of boosting growth in key sectors and firms, and adding social value.

But it had somehow become committed to a long-term strategy based on past priorities rather than a long-term strategy based on future priorities.

"These priorities are set by the (previous) government. Now we have a new government and it

may be useful to reassess these priorities," he remarked.

Khazanah's fund size, he noted, is not actually that big at a realisable asset value of RM127 billion as at the end of 2021 compared to the Employees Provident Fund, for example, at more than RM1 trillion.

"So the priorities are important to get the best socioeconomic outcomes. If you look at its investment portfolio, it is highly invested in old-economy companies which have probably passed their prime.

"At the same time, it is invested in key social companies in healthcare and energy which can offer growth and social impact. Khazanah must relook its portfolio and use responsible privatisation methods to realise some out-of-date assets and raise money for reinvestment in key areas," Williams said.

Another economist, Putra Business School associate professor Dr Ahmed Razman Abdul Latiff, has a different view.

He said there should not be

drastic changes to its strategy for now.

"Khazanah is still in recovery phase. Therefore, there should not be any dramatic changes to its investment and asset management strategy, at least until the global economic situation has improved," he said yesterday.

The NST reached out to the Finance Ministry but no comments were available at press time.

Khazanah was launched in 1994 to consolidate privatised national assets such as the airline, energy, telecommunications and railways.

In 2019, it split its portfolio into a commercial fund (focused on commercial

gains) and a strategic fund (dedicated to driving economic growth by investing in domestic companies). But at its annual review in March 2022, Khazanah consolidated the two funds into a single diversified portfolio with a realisable asset value of about RM124.8 billion, as part of its new "Advancing Malaysia" strategy.

Khazanah's overall portfolio

consists of four portfolios. They are the investment portfolio, the Dana Impak portfolio (with a RM6 billion allocation), developmental assets and special situation assets with distinct return expectations and priorities.

An unidentified former senior Khazanah official reportedly said the consolidation had more optics than substance and that he did not expect a significant impact on its performance due to legacy issues.

Meanwhile, Williams said Khazanah is a development fund focused on long-term socioeconomic development rather than a financial fund focused on short-term returns.

"It also has a mandate to catalyse new growth areas, strengthen Malaysia's economic competitiveness and contribute to priority socioeconomic outcomes.

"Now it has to adopt a new environmental, social and governance strategy too. All of these are very challenging," he added.

Khazanah announced last week that its profit from operations had risen to RM1.6 billion in the year ended Dec 31, 2022 from RM670 million in 2021.

But this was much lower than the RM2.9 billion profit posted in 2020, which was a 61 per cent slump from the preceding year.

## INFO BOX

**RM1.6b**

Khazanah Nasional Bhd's profit in the year ended Dec 31, 2022

**RM2.9b**

Khazanah Nasional Bhd's profit in the year ended Dec 31, 2020

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5G ROLLOUT

## 'DECISION ON DNB SOON'

Govt will not look at it only from the monopoly aspect, says Fahmi

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**A**S the government vows to break monopolies, the attention has turned to Digital Nasional Bhd (DNB), the special purpose vehicle created to drive the development of 5G infrastructure in Malaysia.

Several experts have said DNB had a form of monopoly.

Digital and Communications Minister Fahmi Fadzil said the government had yet to make a decision on DNB.

"We have yet to make a policy decision. I hope we will do so in a week or two.

"We may not look at it only from the monopoly point of view

as there are many things we need to consider. We will announce it (a decision) soon."

DNB is a 5G single wholesale network and the sole entity mandated to roll out 5G nationwide.

Efforts to get telecommunications companies on board have run into problems.

In 2021, DNB appointed Ericsson Malaysia to design and build the national 5G network at a cost of RM11 billion, far lower than the initial RM15 billion.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim had said the gov-

ernment would rigorously review the rollout of the 5G network in Malaysia.

He had said the previous administration did not manage the policy in a transparent manner.

It was reported that Chinese telecommunications giant Huawei was looking to challenge Ericsson in building Malaysia's 5G network.

Recently, Anwar said all ministries had been asked to study monopolies under their purview to promote transparent economic development and fair competition.



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SEVERELY AFFECTED BY FLOODS

## 'CLINICS TO BE FIXED IN 6 MONTHS'

RM750,000 allocation for facilities has been approved, says health minister

**SEGAMAT**

**R**EPAIRS to six health facilities in the state severely affected by floods are expected to be completed within six months.

Health Minister Dr Zaliha Mustafa said the six facilities were Chaah Health Clinic and five rural clinics in Kampung Tengah, Kampung Jawa, Kampung Jabi, Tengah Station and Desa Temu Jodoh, all in Segamat.

"The total damage is estimated to be RM1.8 million.

"The cost of repairing all these facilities is estimated to be RM750,000. The amount for this purpose has been approved," she said after visiting the rural clinic in Kampung Tengah here.

On if there were any facilities being considered for relocation following the disaster, she said only Kampung Tengah rural clinic would be relocated.

"In Kampung Tengah, the clinic is not only exposed to floods, but it is located close to the road. There has already been an accident involving a lorry.

"We have visited the new site, 3km from here, which will be considered as a site for the new facility," said Dr Zaliha.

On the recommendation for the Health Ministry to change the contract system for healthcare workers to a system independent of the Public Service Department and the Finance Ministry, Dr Zaliha said it could be considered.

"It's a good point of view. We can consider it, but it's not something that can be implemented quickly as it involves the service ecosystem itself."

On Friday, public health physician and epidemiologist Datuk Dr Zainal Ariffin Omar urged the ministry to change the system of contract healthcare workers if the ministry wanted to improve the country's health sector.

He said the government needed to create an independent system so that the welfare of the group could be improved.

A total of 6,036 medical officers and 890 ministry specialists were reported to have resigned, from 2018 to 2022. **Bernama**



Health Minister Dr Zaliha Mustafa visiting the rural clinic in Kampung Tengah, Segamat, yesterday. BERNAMA PIC

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PIC BY SAIFULLIZAN TAMADI

# GREEDY OFFICERS 'STRIKE GOLD'

SEVERAL raids by the MACC in recent months throw into stark relief the brazen way law enforcement personnel have been extracting bribes from migrants. The reputational damage to the country is significant, say the graft-busters and experts.

» REPORT BY MOHAMED BASYIR & SHARIFAH MAHSINAH ABDULLAH ON PAGE 3

SURUHANJAYA PENCEGAH  
SPRM  
AMANAH ADIL  
TEGAS  
MALAYSIA



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LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES

## 'CORRUPT OFFICIALS' TARGETING MIGRANTS'

MACC deputy chief says country's reputation tarnished as a result of their actions

MOHAMED BASYIR AND  
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**A**TOP Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission officers says corrupt enforcement officers have hit a "gold mine" with the presence of immigrants in Malaysia.

MACC Deputy Chief Commissioner (operations) Datuk Seri Ahmad Khusairi Yahaya said immigrants were an easy source of bribes for these officers.

He added that this had damaged the country's reputation and underscored the worrying level of corruption, which permeated law enforcement agencies.

He said even workers with legitimate permits, as well as students with visas, were not exempted from the greed of these officials.

Khusairi said several MACC op-

erations — Op Tropicana, Op Bolos KLIA 1 and 2, and Op Lancar — were examples of the involvement of law enforcers in corrupt practices.

"It proves that this issue is serious and requires strict action by enforcement agencies," he said on the MACC's website.

"The Malaysia Boleh slogan is now used cynically, with a connotation that all issues can be resolved with bribes," he said.

Khusairi added that it was not surprising that the country had become a destination for foreign workers to find work illegally, a drug transit centre in Southeast Asia, a centre for fraud and drug laboratories, as well as a hub for Macau scams and online gaming.

"We often reject and deny reality and find excuses.



**It proves that this issue is serious and requires strict action by enforcement agencies. The 'Malaysia Boleh' slogan is now used cynically, with a connotation that all issues can be resolved with bribes.**

DATUK SERI AHMAD  
KHUSAIRI YAHAYA  
MACC deputy chief  
commissioner (operations)

"The common comments that we hear — 'it was an isolated incident' — can no longer be used to deny the reality of how greedy enforcement members are."

In a reaction to Khusairi's statement, crime watch groups urged the MACC to nab crooked officials who preyed on immigrants for bribes.

Malaysian Corruption Watch president Jais Abdul Karim said if nothing was done, there might be a risk of terrorists coming to the country by paying off corrupt officials.

He said the allegation was serious as the country's safety could be compromised due to the greed of these officials.

"We have information that around 80 per cent of officers at one international entry point are involved in

corruption. We have relayed the information to the MACC.

"This is a frightening reality that we must swallow," he told the *New Straits Times*.

Jais said immigrants, legal or otherwise, were easy targets for corrupt officials.

Malaysia being an economically healthy country, he said, had attracted immigrants who would be open to "invest" in corrupt officials to be allowed entry.

Transparency International-Malaysia president Dr Muhammad Mohan agreed that action must be taken to remove corrupt officials.

He said Khusairi's statement was not surprising and it could be the reason for the country's continuous drop in Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index.

Malaysia is ranked 61 out of 180 countries in last year's index and scored only 47 over 100, putting the country behind third-world countries such as Rwanda.

He said TI-M had received many reports about enforcement officers involved in crime and betraying the oath they took as civil servants.

"If we want to put our country

back on track, there is no other way to do so except to go all out to fight these groups and get them out of our system.

"As a start, enforcement agencies must clean up their backyard first."

In Kota Baru, Kelantan, MACC director Rosli Husain said the commission was aware of border security officers working with human traffickers to smuggle in immigrants.

He said these personnel were stationed at the state's entry points or other border areas, including smuggling routes.

"These officers usually collect money from human traffickers or smugglers for turning a blind eye to illegal foreigners entering Kelantan."

"Kelantan MACC has detected these activities based on corruption cases involving the group over the last few years."

"However, their number isn't considered alarming as the departments have put a stop to it," he told the NST.



Dr Muhammad  
Mohan

Page 1 pic: Illegal immigrants detained by enforcement officers at a market in Kuala Lumpur.



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**Taxes: 7-year hard-copy retention no longer needed**

AN e-invoicing initiative will enable taxpayers to keep digital versions of documentation in Inland Revenue Board systems from next year.

» REPORT ON PAGE 4

DOCUMENTS MUST BE KEPT FOR 7 YEARS

## IRB INTRODUCING E-INVOICING NEXT YEAR

CEO says it will reduce burden of record-keeping on taxpayers

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**T**AXPAYERS will no longer be required to keep hard copies of their invoices, vouchers and receipts for seven years when the Inland Revenue Board (IRB) introduces an "e-invoicing" initiative early next year.

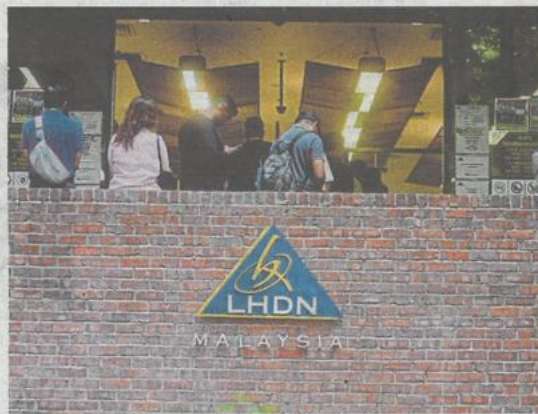
IRB chief executive officer Datuk Dr Mohd Nizom Sairi said the e-invoicing platform would enable taxpayers to keep their records online with them.

"Principally, when it is fully implemented, the e-invoicing initiative will reduce the burden of record-keeping by taxpayers.

"(By then) a lot of (their) information would be with the IRB already. E-invoicing will change everything.

"We hope to get the support (from the relevant parties) to enable it to be implemented perhaps early next year," he said after a corporate visit to Media Prima Bhd's (MPB) Sri Pentas.

Also present were MPB group



Under Section 82A(1) and Section 82A(2) of the Income Tax Act 1967, it is the taxpayers' duty to keep documents for seven years for ascertaining chargeable income and tax payable. FILE PIC

chairman Datuk Seri Dr Syed Hussian Aljunid, MPB group managing director Rafiq Razali and New Straits Times Press group managing editor Datuk Ahmad Zaini Kamaruzzaman.

Nizom said this when asked if there were any efforts by the IRB to amend the Income Tax Act 1967 to ease the requirement of record-keeping as taxpayers needed to keep the documents for seven years.

It comes under Section 82A(1)

and Section 82A(2) of the act for duty to keep documents for ascertaining chargeable income and tax payable.

Among the documents needed for records are the EA form as well as medical, books, donation and insurance receipts.

The IRB has a right to request for the documents to conduct audits.

Under Section 119A of the act, one can be fined up to RM10,000 for failure to keep records.

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## IRB on perpetual hunt for tax evaders

**PETALING JAYA:** The Inland Revenue Board (IRB) is on "perpetual duty" hunting down those who avoid filing their income tax returns annually.

IRB chief executive officer Datuk Dr Mohd Nizom Sairi said the board took seriously Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim's recent call to pursue "towkays" and the ultra rich who did not pay taxes.

"This is a call that we are paying a lot of attention to. That is what the IRB has been doing, day in and day out. The prime minister's call also serves as a reminder to the people to pay their taxes."

"Our work is to ensure those who are supposed to pay taxes do so. If we get to track down a party who does not pay taxes, it will surely lead to the discovery of others who have not done so, too."

At the recent 27th Hasil Day celebration, Anwar had said he wanted IRB to ensure taxpayers fulfil their responsibilities.

The authorities, he had said, should conduct thorough investigations against tax evaders, especially the ultra-rich.

Everyone must abide by the law and not escape paying taxes, including those in his contacts, supporters or family members, he had said.

During the PKR special convention, Anwar had said there was someone worth billions of ringgit who did not pay taxes and wanted to escape from the country.

He had said that this someone had lost power and feared being investigated by the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission

and IRB.

"I will not let go of these towkays and the ultra rich who do not pay taxes."

On another matter, Nizom said taxpayers dissatisfied with the decision to end tax relief for depositors in the National Education Savings Scheme (SSPN) could bring it up with the government.

"I feel the people and taxpayers themselves can voice out to the government that they want a review of the decision."

"On our part, we convey the feedback from the people to the government. This is to ensure the policies (implemented) have their finger on the pulse of the people," he added.

Nizom said the government had in the past two years offered tax relief of up to RM8,000 to SSPN depositors with the National Higher Education Fund Corporation (PTPTN) to encourage parents to save for their children's education.

"However, this year the government has stopped it and this means those who save with SSPN will not be eligible for the tax relief. IRB will implement what was decided at the government policy level."

It was reported that Deputy Finance Minister Steven Sim had said the government would not extend the tax relief for several reasons. These included the two per cent cut in individual income tax, an increase in tax relief for medical expenses and the PTPTN loan repayment moratorium for those earning less than RM1,800.

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## Cabinet to study proposal before deciding if LCS project continues

**THE** Defence Ministry is at the final stage of finalising the proposal for the continuation of the Littoral Combat Ship (LCS) project.

Deputy Defence Minister Adly Zahari said the proposal would be presented to the cabinet for a decision soon.

"We are in the final stage of the proposal and it will be presented to the cabinet in the shortest time.

"Details related (to the continuation of the project) will be shared once it has been finalised by the cabinet," he said during the ministry's winding-up session for the 2023 Supply Bill in the Dewan Rakyat.

Previously, Defence Minister Datuk Seri Mohamad Hasan had said that the cabinet would decide whether to reduce the number of LCS from six to five.

He had said that the previous administration had agreed to reduce the number of LCS units at the same cost as the original six vessels.

He said the cost of the RM9.13

billion LCS project remained the same despite only five ships being built instead of six.

Meanwhile, Adly said the detailed design of the LCS project had surpassed 94 per cent completion compared with the 82 per cent approved by France's Naval Group (NG) previously.



Adly Zahari

He added that delays in payment had caused delays in the approval of the detailed design for the ships.

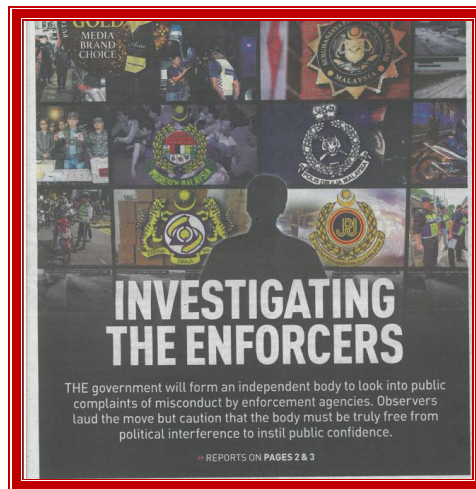
"However, the ministry alongside Boustead Naval Shipyard Sdn Bhd has received NG's cooperation as the design authority and carried out an audit on the design work at the end of last year.

"The remaining detailed design of the ships has yet to be completed and only involves non-critical zones, hence there is no issue if the LCS project is continued based on the approved percentage of the detailed design.

"However, it is up to the cabinet to decide whether they want to continue the project."



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ALL ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES

## INDEPENDENT BODY TO PROBE ENFORCERS

Move will ensure greater transparency and accountability when agencies are investigated, says PM

TEH ATHIRA YUSOF  
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**T**HE government plans to establish an independent body to investigate enforcement agencies whenever an allegation or a report is lodged against them.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said this would ensure greater transparency and accountability among enforcement agencies.

He said there was a need to improve the practice of enforcement agencies investigating themselves whenever complaints were lodged against their personnel.

He said that was why there had been proposals to establish an independent body like the Independent Police Conduct Commission (IPCC).

However, he said, the government wanted this to be expanded to include other enforcement agencies, like the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC), as well as the Immigration and Customs Departments.

"Why only the police? We also need to have an independent agency similar to IPCC to investigate other enforcement agencies."

"That is why we have asked the Attorney-General's Chambers to review this and ensure that they (enforcement agencies) don't investigate themselves," he said when responding to a question by Gobind Singh Deo (PH-Puchong).

Gobind, in a supplementary question, asked the prime minister, who is the Tambun member of parliament, if the government had any mechanism to address allegations of corruption involving high-ranking officers from enforcement agencies like MACC.

It was previously reported that the IPCC would be in force starting July 1.



Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim says the Attorney-General's Chambers will review and ensure enforcement agencies don't investigate themselves. (BERHAMA PH)

In a parliamentary written reply, the Home Ministry said it was awaiting approval for staffing and allocation for the establishment of the commission.

This was in response to a question by DAP's Kepong MP Lim Lip Eng on the status of the establishment of the Independent Police Complaints and Misconduct Commission (IPCMC).

It has been almost two decades since a Royal Commission of Inquiry recommended the establishment of the IPCMC.

The closest it came to fruition was when the Pakatan Harapan government tabled the IPCMC Bill in 2019. The Bill, however, received criticism and it was sent for a review by a Parliamentary Select Committee.

The IPCMC Bill was later replaced with the IPCC Bill when Perikatan Nasional assumed power.

To another question, Anwar said he was open to any investigation into the political funding received by or given to PKR.

He acknowledged that there was a need for a comprehensive legislation on political funding.

Minister in the Prime Minister's Department (Law and Constitutional Reforms) Datuk Seri Azalina Othman Said told the *New Straits Times* that the "new" independent body mentioned by Anwar was actually an enhancement of the Enforcement Agency Integrity Commission (EAIC).

She said the Legal Affairs Division would set up a pro tem committee to review how EAIC's

powers could be enhanced.

"The pro tem committee will study how the EAIC can be revamped for maximum efficiency, how to enforce the existing powers of the EAIC, and how the set up of new agencies can further enhance the commission," she said.

For now, said Azalina, any concern and complaint on maladministration by enforcement agencies will be handled by EAIC.

"As a non-prosecutorial body, EAIC serves to ensure the accountability and integrity of Malaysian enforcement institutions."

However, it was unclear if EAIC would be given prosecutorial powers in its enhanced vision.

Azalina said an ombudsman agency would also be set up to deal with complaints against other civil servants. She said the framework for the ombudsman agency was being drawn up.

"The agency will address concerns and complaints from the public with regard to maladministration, presently handled by the Public Complaints Bureau."

On March 7, Azalina said the government was considering several new measures to expedite the Ombudsman Malaysia Act to enhance integrity and governance in addressing public complaints.

This includes introducing a new investigative body and Ombudsman Malaysia to provide an annual report to Parliament.

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## Govt mulls separation of public prosecutor, A-G roles

**KUALA LUMPUR:** The government is mulling the proposal to separate the public prosecutor's office from the Attorney-General's Chambers (A-GC).

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said the separation of powers, however, was not the government's main priority in ensuring the A-GC's prosecution process was more transparent and independent.

"The proposal is being studied. It is a bit complicated and time-consuming.

"In principle, many have agreed to separate the entities. However, the financial implications at the

implementation stage need to be considered as, in this case, it will involve an additional RM300 million," he said during the prime minister's question time in the Dewan Rakyat yesterday.

Anwar said this in response to a supplementary question from Chiew Choon Man (PH-Miri) on the government's plan to separate the public prosecutor's office from the A-GC to steer clear from any political prosecution allegations on any politicians.

Previously, Minister in Prime Minister's Department (Law and Institutional Reforms) Datuk Seri Azalina Othman Said had held a

meeting with A-GC representatives, led by Solicitor-General Datuk Ahmad Terrirudin Salleh, to discuss the separation of powers between the attorney-general and public prosecutor.

Following the discussion, she said the A-GC would prepare a document on the restructuring plans.

At the same time, several parties, including the Malaysian Bar, had also called on the government to separate the public prosecutor's office and the A-GC to ensure greater transparency in the country's justice system.

On another matter, Anwar said

any prosecution of any individual reported in the Pandora Papers and Panama Papers was under the A-GC's jurisdiction.

"There is information on the actions being taken before (by the previous administration). However, I have taken a comprehensive approach since I took over the role.

"Hence, it is up to the discretion of the police or the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission to refer to the A-GC on anyone linked to any case.

"They will decide on the prosecution and they should answer on this, not the prime minister."

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## 'Appointment of MACC chief will follow due process'

**KUALA LUMPUR:** The appointment of the next Malaysia Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) chief will be based on the process approved by the Parliamentary Select Committee and relevant authority bodies.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim told the Lower House yesterday that the process of appointing the new MACC chief should follow due process.

"The appointment of the current MACC chief was done by the Pagoh member of parliament (Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin) and he was certified by Pagoh as a person who is independent," he said.

"The new method to appoint the MACC chief will depend on the progress made in Parliament.

"If the mechanism decided is from the recommendation by Transparency International-Malaysia, then it must be reviewed by the Attorney-General's Chambers and the Parliamentary Select Committee.

"If it's doable then I have no problem, but the process must be respected."

Anwar was responding to Datuk Mas Ermiyati (PN-Masjid Tanah) on the government's process of appointing the new MACC chief, as current chief commissioner Tan Sri Azam Baki's term was due to end soon.

She had also asked if the prime minister could guarantee that the appointment process would be brought to the special committee and the Lower House.

On Feb 5, Azam said MACC was open to the idea of having the appointments of its chief and senior officers placed under the authority of Parliament, as suggested by Dewan Rakyat Speaker Datuk Johari Abdul.

He added that he had yet to be called for any discussion on the matter.

Johari had suggested several improvements would be implemented to empower Parliament, including establishing special select committees on the appointments of key positions in government agencies, such as MACC and the Election Commission.

On March 9, 2020, Azam was appointed as the anti-graft body's chief following the resignation of his predecessor, Lath-eefa Koya.

The prime minister also said the decision to retain Azam as the MACC chief proved the agency was independent from his influence.



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#### DIRECT NEGOTIATIONS

## Fahmi: 97pc of DNB contracts acquired via competitive bidding

**UP** to December, 215 contracts with an overall value of RM7.8 billion have been signed by Digital Nasional Bhd (DNB), with 97 per cent, or 138 contracts acquired through competitive bidding (limited tender).

Communications and Digital Minister Fahmi Fadzil said 77 contracts were awarded via direct negotiations in 2021 when DNB was just set up with the objective of implementing 5G network in a short period of time.

"DNB was established in 2021. At that time, DNB needed the set skills which were not available and could only be acquired from suitable global companies which have the technology," he said in the Dewan Rakyat yesterday.

He was replying to a question from Datuk Seri Dr Dzulkefly Ahmad (Pakatan Harapan-Kuala Selangor) on the readiness to enforce acquisition by tender, including launching the 5G project led by DNB which have in-

vited controversies since its launch.

He said the government did not propose to reopen contracts that had been signed with DNB as respecting the principle of the sanctity of contracts. He gave the assurance that in future, all such contracts would be acquired through open tender.

Fahmi said the ministry was studying and tightening the governance of DNB so that the best standards would be adopted by the company.

Replying to Dzulkefly's supplementary question on the quality of service (QoS) of DNB, Fahmi said the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission would always regulate and audit the agency to assure service quality.

He said, the provisions of the Communications and Multimedia Act would be used against any service provider, including DNB, if the QoS was not satisfactory.

**Bernama**

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MET ON DATING WEBSITE

## Woman loses RM500,000 to foreigner in love scam

**KUALA TERENGGANU:** A woman who works at an institution of higher learning ended up RM500,000 poorer when she was conned by her "lover", whom she had become acquainted with via social media.

Kuala Terengganu district police chief Assistant Commissioner Abdul Rahim Md Din said the victim got to know the man, believed to be a foreigner, through a dating website in July 2020.

He said from the get-go, the suspect would frequently ask for money from the victim.

The suspect gave her all sorts of excuses on why he needed the money.

"Throughout the three years, the victim made a total of 22 transactions, amounting to RM500,000, to several accounts given by the suspect.

"The victim said she gave all her money, including her savings

and money from a personal loan, to the suspect because she loved and believed in him as she had known him for quite some time.

"The victim believed the suspect and also followed the suspect's instructions. The foreigner even told her to throw away all the evidence in the form of money transfer receipts," Rahim said in a statement here yesterday.

Rahim said the victim only realised that she had been deceived after her colleague informed her that the foreigner was not the individual that was in contact with her all this while.

She then lodged a police report and the case is being investigated under Section 420 of the Penal Code.

"Members of the public are reminded to be careful, alert and be aware of the tactics of scammers who have used such pretexts to cheat and dupe many victims," Rahim said.