

The Star December 2017

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1. Graftbuster denies extorting police officer

BUKIT MERTAJAM: A senior Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) officer has claimed trial to a charge of extorting RM3,000 from a police officer.

Rommy Ma'iaruf, 38, pleaded not guilty when charged in a magistrate's court yesterday with extorting Insp Ahmad Hasbi Mohd Fauzi, 32, at a petrol station in Seberang Jaya at about 9.30pm on June 8.

The accused, who is based at the MACC headquarters in Putrajaya, faces a maximum jail term of 10 years or a fine or whipping, or any two of the penalties.

Deputy public prosecutor Muhammad Hafiz Hashim asked that bail not be offered.

Magistrate Jamaliah Abdul Manap set bail at RM8,000 in one surety and ordered the accused to report to the nearest police station twice a month.

She fixed Jan 4 for mention.

2. Azmin's nephew under another investigation

PUTRAJAYA: A nephew of Selangor Mentri Besar Datuk Seri Mohamed Azmin Ali is now under another investigation.

Sources said the 34-year-old was under investigation for allegedly acting as a middleman to help contractors secure projects from the Selangor state government.

Yesterday, the suspect and three others were remanded for a week until Dec 6 by the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC).

All four suspects were being investigated for suspected involvement in illegal sand mining activities in the state.

"The fresh allegation was discovered during the course of investigations into his role in illegal sand mining activities.

"We want to get to the bottom of this and find out how far the suspect has been using his uncle's name for personal gains.

"The investigation will also look into the amount of kickbacks involved and money exchanging hands," said a source.

Following a public tip-off on illegal mining activities, MACC officers raided a company in Sungai Long early Wednesday.

At that time, they were unaware of the involvement of the menteri besar's nephew.

"During questioning, a person by the name of 'Aboy' was mentioned.

"The suspect was then picked up at his house in Kuala Lumpur. Background checks showed he is related to the Mentri Besar and runs an advertising firm," added a source.

As part of the investigation, several lorries and bank accounts with cash amounting to RM4mil were seized.

It is understood that as a result of the illegal activities, the state government lost millions of ringgit in revenue.

In SHAH ALAM, the MB Office's strategic communications director Yin Shao Loong confirmed that one of the suspects held by the MACC was the son of one of Mohamed Azmin's sisters.

"The state government regretted that the information, about the suspect being Mohamed Azmin's nephew, was leaked to social media and Umno-linked blogs.

"It clearly shows a conspiracy to tarnish the reputation of the Mentri Besar and state government in the advent of the 14th general election," Yin said in a statement.

He said they had no issue with the MACC carrying out an investigation.

"The state government welcomes professional and transparent investigations in line with legal provisions and without interference from those with 'vested interest'," he added.

3. **MACC chief: No political motive in Azmin's nephew's case**

PUTRAJAYA: There is no political motive in the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission's (MACC) probe into illegal sand-mining activities in Selangor, says Tan Sri Dzulkifli Ahmad.

The MACC chief commissioner added that his personnel have been professional in investigations which saw the arrest of four people, including a nephew of Mentri Besar Datuk Seri Azmin Ali.

"The information received had basis, as such, we started our investigations. So we are free from any form of influence or even sabotage as mentioned," he told reporters after an event on Saturday.

Dzulkifli was responding to the Selangor state administration which had alleged that there is a "conspiracy" to tarnish the reputation of Azmin and the state government.

"Let's wait and see what happens next week," he said.

All four suspects have been remanded until Dec 6.

They are said to have raked in huge profits from sand-mining activities in the state since 2014.

Two of the suspects are company directors, aged 41 and 67, while the third suspect is a 45-year-old site manager.

4. Zahid: MACC should also investigate private sector, state governments

KUALA LUMPUR: The Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission should also investigate the private sector and state governments, said Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi.

The Deputy Prime Minister said that investigations should be done across the board, and not just on the public sector.

"Where there are takers, there must be givers. In most cases, the takers end up getting arrested while the givers get off scot-free. This is unfair," said Dr Ahmad Zahid.

He added that both givers and takers of bribes should be given equal treatment.

Dr Ahmad Zahid, also the Home Minister, said that the MACC should look into the destruction of permanent forest reserves by state governments as it involves natural flora and fauna.

"This is important as we need to preserve the environment for future generations," he said.

On the looming general election, Dr Ahmad Zahid said the Umno Overseas Students Bureaus and Clubs are gearing themselves for battle, adding that the battlegrounds have been set.

He said that Umno members should not fear a fierce battle, and said that they should only think of Umno and Barisan Nasional being the winners.

5. Senai assemblywoman records statement over leaked MACC documents

JOHOR BARU: Senai assemblywoman Wong Shu Qi turned up at the Johor police headquarters to give her statement over the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission's (MACC) classified documents that were leaked online.

Wong arrived at the police headquarters at 4.15pm Friday (Dec 8), accompanied by DAP Legal Bureau chief Gobind Singh Deo, who is also the Puchong MP.

Speaking to reporters after giving her statement to the investigating officer from Bukit Aman, Wong said she was being investigated under Section 203A of the Penal Code and Section 233 of the Communication and Multimedia Act 1998.

Gobind said police had asked the assemblywoman to assist in the investigation according to Section 112 of the Criminal Procedure Code, and that process lasted about 40 minutes.

Gobind said he would write to the MACC and Inspector-General of Police Tan Sri Mohamad Fuzi Harun to learn about the matter mentioned by Wong during the debate as it had become a general knowledge and a public issue.

On Nov 27, Wong was asked to leave the sitting when debating the State Budget 2018 after she refused to withdraw her remarks questioning the authenticity of MACC documents uploaded online.

The documents allegedly implicated that Johor Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Mohamed Khaled Nordin was involved in a property scandal, which also involved a former assemblyman in the state.

Mohamed Khaled had strongly refuted the allegation.

6. Former Sabah Water Department deputy director to be charged on Wednesday

KOTA KINABALU: A former Sabah Water Department deputy director is expected to be charged on Wednesday (Dec 13).

The 52-year-old, who was re-arrested by the Malaysian Anti Corruption Agency here at about noon on Tuesday, is expected to be brought to court on Wednesday to face charges of money laundering and corruption.

MACC deputy chief commissioner Datuk Azam Baki confirmed his arrest and said that they were going to charge the suspect.

The former deputy director was among four key people investigated in connection with the massive corruption investigations that shocked the nation late last year.

Lim was also a retired deputy director of the department.

Their cases are scheduled to be heard from Feb 5 next year.

The former deputy director will be the fourth to be charged in connection with the case and comes a year after the three were charged following the launch of Ops Water on Oct 4.

7. MACC drops Annuar Musa probe, cites lack of evidence

PETALING JAYA: The Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) will not pursue its case against suspended Mara chairman Tan Sri Annuar Musa over allegations of graft and abuse of power.

MACC deputy chief commissioner (operations) Datuk Seri Azam Baki said the commission decided to drop the case due to a lack of evidence and will not be pressing charges.

"After looking into the case, the prosecution has decided to not charge him because the statements and the evidence collected so far are insufficient to charge him," Azam said.

Annuar had been questioned over accusations that he had used his position as Mara chairman to force Pelaburan Mara Bhd (PMB), a subsidiary of Mara that he also chaired, and Universiti Kuala Lumpur (UniKL) to sponsor RM700,000 to the Kelantan Football Association which he then helmed.

The Umno information chief has denied all allegations but was suspended as Mara chairman.

Meanwhile, current Mara chairman Datuk Awang Adek Hussin denied rumours that Annuar would be returning to the agency. "I have not officially heard of Annuar returning to Mara, it might just be rumours," he said.

8. Former SLDB general manager, plantation owner acquitted of CBT



KOTA KINABALU: A former general manager of state-owned Sabah Land Development Board (SLDB) and a palm oil plantation owner have been acquitted of criminal breach of trust totalling RM9mil.

Former SLDB manager George @ Juaari Majid walked out of court a free man on Friday after Sessions Court judge Abu Bakar Manat ruled that the prosecution had failed to establish a prima facie against him.

Abu Bakar also freed plantation owner How Kim San, 55, who had been accused of abetting George.

George had been accused of approving the RM9mil payment to How in four transactions between March 22 and Aug 14, 2013.

He was accused of approving the payment for 164ha of land at Kampung Babason in Sook at Keningau district and the compensation for the crops without the approval of the SLDB board of directors and the state Finance Ministry.

George, who was charged under Section 409 of the Penal Code, was also alleged to have known that the land in question was owned by the state government.

Defence counsel Ansari Abdullah represented George and counsel Sugumar Balakrishnan defended How.

9. Group lodges report, wants MACC to probe TMI over 'funding irregularities'



PETALING JAYA: A non-governmental organisation has urged the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) to investigate news portal The Malaysian Insight (TMI), alleging that there are irregularities in terms of its funding.

"We want MACC to investigate whether the money received by TMI was through corruption or if there is a possibility that the money received from overseas is part of an agenda," Jaringan Melayu Malaysia (JMM) president Datuk Azwanddin Hamzah said on Friday after lodging a report at the MACC's headquarters in Putrajaya.

Azwanddin was speaking in reference to allegations that RM3mil was given to TMI with no proper transaction records indicating where the money came from.

"We received a complaint from Myaduan Rasuah and also obtained a few documents which we believe were authentic and given by a source in TMI," he said.

Azwanddin claimed he had records revealing that the company's funding was mainly from Hong Kong, through a firm called Inside Asia Pte Ltd that was also headed by TMI chief executive officer and editor Jahabar Sadiq.

Azwanddin alleged that the news portal published articles that undermined the Government, defamed the Prime Minister, and threatened the nation's economy.

Jahabar when contacted said it was up to JMM to decide what they wanted to do.

"Those are his allegations. I guess if the authorities want to investigate (and) if anything we do is deemed to be against Malaysian law, (then) I'm sure they will investigate us," he said.

In a press conference on Thursday (Dec 14), Azwanddin had also alleged that he had documents from the Companies Commission of Malaysia linking TMI to Puan Sri Faridah Begum Abdul Kader, as a director of Inside Media Sdn Bhd, the holding company of TMI.

Faridah is Jahabar's sister and the wife of Attorney-General Tan Sri Mohamed Apandi Ali.

10. Former Telekom Malaysia officer jailed for graft



ALOR SETAR: A former assistant technical officer with Telekom Malaysia was sentenced to six months' jail and fined RM150,000 by the Sessions Court here after he pleaded guilty to two counts of bribery.

Sukri Mat (*pic*), 49, from Pokok Sena near here pleaded guilty on Monday (Dec 18) after both charges were read to him before judge Azman Abu Hassan for the offences committed in 2015.

According to the charge sheet, Sukri solicited a bribe amounting to RM20,000 from Badlishah Hamid, 47, through an SMS from his mobile phone for him to approve and deem works carried out by the latter as satisfactory.

The works involved moving of copper and fibre optic cables and other projects at Jalan Alor Setar - Gunung Keriang for Telekom Malaysia.

For the second charge, Sukri pleaded guilty to receiving a bribe amounting to RM10,000 from Badlishah at Restoran Nasi Kandar Imran here on Sept 21, 2015, at about 2.50pm.

He committed the offence under Section 17(A) of the MACC Act 2009 (Act 694) and punishable under Section 24(1) of the same Act.

The accused was not represented while MACC deputy public prosecutor A Hafiizh Abu Bakar prosecuted.

In mitigation, Sukri asked for the judge to impose a lenient sentence as he regretted his action which led to family problems.

"I am out of a job after I was sacked and now I am taking care of five people including my three children aged 22, 21 and 10, an 80-year-old sickly father and a mentally challenged sister," he said.

Taking into consideration the severity of the offence, the court then sentenced Sukri to six months in jail and fined him RM100,000 for the first offence.

For the second offence, Sukri was sentenced to six months' jail and fined RM50,000.

The jail sentences were ordered to be run concurrently and Sukri was sent to the Perlis correctional centre.

However, Sukri will have to serve another six months in jail if he fails to pay the RM100,000 fine and another six months should he fail to pay the fine of RM50,000.

11. Dr M: Ex-BNM assistant governor should also be held accountable over forex losses



PETALING JAYA: Former Bank Negara Malaysia (BNM) assistant governor Datuk Abdul Murad Khalid should also be held accountable for the central bank's foreign exchange (forex) losses in the 1990s, says Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad

The former prime minister said as a banker, Abdul Murad had known about the losses but chose to keep quiet about it and only revealed his knowledge recently.

"He could have exposed it much earlier, as well as the officers and the auditors involved, but he did not.

"If the then prime minister and the then deputy prime minister are accused of hiding losses of up to RM30bil, Abdul Murad was even more involved in hiding the truth," Dr Mahathir wrote in his blog, chedet.cc, on Wednesday.

The RCI began in August after Abdul Murad revealed in June that the central bank's losses amounted to at least US\$10bil (then RM25bil).

During the RCI, Abdul Murad, who had taken over as manager of BNM's Banking Department in April 1992, said that he learned of the losses only in May of that year.

He also claimed that the forex losses were not reflected in the bank's profit and loss account, but were recorded in the "other reserves" account.

In his testimony, he said former deputy prime minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim was briefed on the matter, and that Abdul Murad was told that Anwar would have needed to resign from his finance minister's position if the real losses were revealed to the public.

Dr Mahathir, who is now Pakatan Harapan chairman, said it was clear that the RCI report merely focused on the involvement of the then prime minister, deputy prime minister, the finance minister and head of BNM's money market division.

"Everything is based on a presumption. And this presumption is considered as the truth for the police to take action.

"The RCI is not the judiciary, but its report is more about punishing those involved," he said.

12. Felda lodges police report over alleged land fraud involving RM270mil

KUALA LUMPUR: The Federal Land Development Authority (Felda) has lodged a police report over alleged fraud involving four plots of land worth an estimated RM270mil along Jalan Semarak, following an ownership transfer deal with a company in 2014.

Its chairman Tan Sri Shahrir Abdul Samad said the report was lodged on Dec 12 after uncovering elements of alleged fraud in the transfer deal.

He added that he only found out about this after taking over the Felda chairman post in January this year and immediately informed the Prime Minister.

"We were shocked when we found out about the transaction involving millions of ringgit, but Felda did not receive a single sen from it," he told a press conference at Menara Felda here on Thursday.

Shahrir said aside from lodging a police report, Felda was also looking at revoking the Power of Attorney (PA) given to the company concerned and registering a caveat on the land.

He also did not discount the possibility of taking civil action against the company and appointing a third-party auditor to look into the deal.

13. Najib wants probe into dubious Felda land deals

KUALA LUMPUR: Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak wants an investigation into the alleged dubious land deals involving four parcels of Felda land in Jalan Semarak here that was transferred to a private company.

In a series of tweets, he said that action would be taken if the investigation revealed any negligence or misconduct.

"An investigation will be conducted to ensure whether there has been negligence or misconduct by those involved. Measures have to be taken to safeguard the interests of Felda and its settlers," he said.

In JOHOR BARU, Felda chairman Tan Sri Shahrir Abdul Samad said it was the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission's (MACC) prerogative to investigate the matter.

"After consulting with Felda's legal team as well as the legal counsels of the Prime Minister's Department and the Attorney-General Chambers on various aspects of the deal, all of them are pointing towards fraud.

"To us, fraud is a crime and it is for the police to investigate. It is up to MACC if they want to investigate too," he said during a press conference after attending a mass circumcision ceremony at the Larkin Flats here on Friday.

Shahrir did not identify those involved in the deals.

"Our country is a country with many public records, all the names needed can be found," he added.

It was reported that Felda was in danger of losing ownership of four pieces of land worth an estimated RM270mil along Jalan Semarak following a transfer deal in 2014.

14. Ismail: Probe all parties in Felda land transfer case

BERA: A thorough probe should be conducted on all parties involved in the ownership transfer of the Felda land in Jalan Semarak, Kuala Lumpur, said Rural and Regional Development Minister Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob, as police said they might call up former Felda chairman Tan Sri Mohd Isa Abdul Samad to help investigations.

Ismail Sabri said the probe should cover not only Felda and Felda Investment Corporation Sdn Bhd, but also the appointed developer of the land.

"The probe must get to the root of the issue as the land is very valuable," Ismail Sabri, who is also an Umno supreme council member, said when met at a mass wedding reception at Kompleks Rakan Muda Bera yesterday.

Felda is an agency under his ministry.

Felda chairman Tan Sri Shahrir Abdul Samad said a police report was lodged on Dec 12 and a caveat was placed on the parcels of land, besides the cancellation of the power of attorney issued and civil action against the parties involved.

In George Town on Friday night, Deputy Inspector-General of Police Tan Sri Noor Rashid Ibrahim said police had on Dec 13 formed a special team to probe alleged fraud in the land transfer.

He said police also did not rule out the possibility of calling Mohd Isa to facilitate investigations

15. Isa Samad ready to cooperate over Felda land issue



PORT DICKSON: Former Felda chairman Tan Sri Mohd Isa Abdul Samad (*pic*) is ready to cooperate with authorities over the issue of ownership of the Felda land in Jalan Semarak, Kuala Lumpur.

He said that the police had yet to contact him for his statement, after current Felda chairman Tan Sri Shahrir Abdul Samad lodged a police report on the matter.

'Thus far, the police have yet to call me. Let the police do their job, but I am willing to cooperate if the police or Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) calls.

"I don't want to comment further as I do not want this to become a political issue," he said when met after attending the Teluk Kemang parliamentary constituency's Warriors' Day fund-raising campaign at Batu 4, here on Monday (Dec 25).

The land title transfer is believed to have occurred after Felda Investment Corporation (FIC) had appointed a local company as the main developer on June 3, 2014, and awarded it full power of attorney to develop the land.

Following this, the Royal Malaysian Police set up a special task force to investigate the matter and did not rule out calling Mohd Isa to assist in the investigation.

Earlier, Mohd Isa, who is also the patron of the Port Dickson Army Veterans Association, denied the allegations that he had been avoiding the media.

"Many said I ran away (from the media). I have been busy attending various programmes here, and in Jempol and Seremban," he said.

16. Shahrir: Settle the land issue, and Felda will be on the right track



KUALA LUMPUR: Felda chairman Tan Sri Shahrir Abdul Samad (*pic*) believes efforts to regain the Felda-owned land which was transferred through dubious transactions will be the final step in putting Felda on the right track.

In an interview with Bernama at the Felda headquarters Wednesday, Shahrir said other issues that had derailed Felda were being handled by the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) and the courts.

"It is right to say that this land issue at (Jalan) Semarak will be the last. In fact, this is the most complex issue.

"Other issues were the purchase of the Grand Plaza Kensington Hotel and the Merdeka Palace Hotel and Suites in Kuching which are ongoing.

"This land deal which was recently opened will be the last issue. All these were uncovered during my first year as Felda chairman," he said.

Since his appointment on Jan 6, Shahrir has taken several actions to restructure Felda's management and assets, and to strengthen its financial position.

Among the drastic measures he took was to call for the resignation of all Felda Investment Corporation (FIC) board members in January, and the sale of assets including luxury cars and the Grand Plaza Serviced Apartments in London, United Kingdom.

Two FIC assets in London and Kuching are being investigated by the MACC as they were allegedly bought at a price much higher than the market rate, resulting in losses to the Felda subsidiary.

Shahrir added that when he took over the helm in January, apart from the settlers, the banks too had no confidence in Felda, so it was difficult to get funding from them as they had demanded higher levels of collateral.

"Looking at this situation, we decided to sell off unnecessary assets. What's important is for us to stabilise Felda's finances immediately.

"Following this, in June Maybank offered Felda the sukuk issuance. I did not believe it at first, but this was a sign of the bank's confidence in Felda," he said.

Shahrir also called on the Felda board of directors who were responsible to provide clarification on the granting of full power of attorney (PA) to Synergy Promede Sdn Bhd, which was not reported to the board of directors.

"Why was the decision made without the board's approval but was only endorsed after that when this is a grave matter? Why was full power of attorney given to this company?

"This is doubtful because the decision was made even before the board meeting," said Shahrir.

According to records, the full power of attorney was granted on June 3, 2014 and only reported to the board on Sept 2 that same year.

"People outside Felda were not aware of what was happening within the agency. We got news on the land ownership transfer at the end of January this year.

"From then on, we carefully devised a plan on how to handle the situation as it involved several parties including government departments and staff.

"The Attorney-General's Chambers came on strongly, advising us to revoke the PA and lodge a registrar's caveat. We have worked towards that direction," he said.