

The Star January 2017

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1. MACC: Sec-gen is from Rural and Regional Development Ministry

PETALING JAYA: The suspect who was arrested earlier Wednesday for alleged graft is from the Rural and Regional Development Ministry, confirms Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) deputy chief commissioner (operations) Datuk Azam Baki.

When contacted to verify the identity of the suspect, Azam confirmed that it was the current Ministry secretary-general, Datuk Mohd Arif Ab Rahman.

In a statement earlier, Azam said that Mohd Arif was arrested at his house in USJ Subang Jaya at 8am.

Also arrested was a 29-year-old male suspect.

Mohd Arif is suspected to have abused his power and position since 2010 to solicit bribes.

Initial investigations showed he had a direct hand in appointing contractors, suppliers and vendors.

The MACC has also confiscated cash and gold bars worth about RM3mil.

2. MACC seizes RM3mil in cash and gold bars in latest graft case



PETALING JAYA: The Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) has seized gold bars and cash amounting to about RM3mil in the graft investigation involving a top-ranking civil servant.

It was reported that the secretary-general of a Federal ministry with a "Datuk" title was the latest to be detained by the MACC for alleged corruption.

"Also arrested was a 29-year-old male individual who is believed to have received and kept bribes from contractors, suppliers and vendors linked to the secretary-general," said MACC deputy chief commissioner (operations) Datuk Azam Baki in a statement on Wednesday.

"So far, the MACC has confiscated cash and gold bars worth about RM3mil," said Azam.

A team from the MACC picked up both suspects at about 8am on Wednesday.

The Datuk, aged 59, was detained at his house in USJ Subang Jaya.

He is suspected to have abused his power and position since 2010 to solicit for bribes.

Initial investigations showed the Datuk had a direct hand in appointing contractors, suppliers and vendors.

3. Additional RM2.6mil in cash and gold seized in MACC investigation



PETALING JAYA: More gold and cash worth an estimated RM2.6mil have been recovered in relation to the arrest of Datuk Mohd Arif Ab Rahman (pic), the secretary-general of the Rural and Regional Development Ministry.

Sources said a team of graft busters went to open up a safe deposit box in a bank on Thursday and seized about 8kg worth of gold valued at RM1.6mil.

In addition, several other safe deposit boxes from another few banks also saw the seizure of RM1mil worth of cash, including AUD80,000.

"We also towed back a multi-purpose vehicle - a Toyota Estima - owned by the suspect's son from his house in Subang Jaya.

"Our records showed that there are more than 10 plots of land registered under the family's name around the Klang Valley region," added the source.

The value of the land has yet to be determined and the MACC was still checking if the properties were amassed through corrupt ways.

The MACC will also be liaising with the Inland Revenue Board to ascertain if the Datuk had evaded paying any taxes since 2010.

MACC deputy chief commissioner (operations) Datuk Azam Baki said so far, no new arrests had been made.

Azam said however, more witnesses would be sought to assist in the probe.

On Wednesday, the MACC arrested Mohd Arif at his home just as he was about to leave for work.

Azam confirmed the arrest of the serving Rural and Regional Development Ministry secretary-general by his officers.

Mohd Arif was nabbed at his home in USJ3, Subang Jaya, while his two sons were arrested at the MACC headquarters in Putrajaya after they were called in for questioning.

Officers who conducted a 12-hour search at Mohd Arif's house found gold bars, 150 luxury handbags, branded watches and foreign currencies.

The gold bars and Australian and Euro currencies seized were estimated at RM3mil.

The designer handbags were from brands such as Chanel, Hermes, Dior, Louis Vuitton and Gucci.

Prices for some of these bags range from RM7,000 to RM100,000 each.

4. MACC arrests ministry sec-gen

PETALING JAYA: Three months after trailing him, the Malaysian-Anti Corruption Commission (MACC) moved in and arrested Rural and Regional Development Ministry secretary-general Datuk Mohd Arif Ab Rahman at his home just as he was about to leave for work.

Gold bars, 150 luxury handbags, branded watches and foreign currencies were found after officers searched the property in USJ3, Subang Jaya, for 12 hours.

The gold bars and Australian and Euro currencies seized were estimated at RM3mil.

The designer handbags were from brands such as Chanel, Hermes, Dior, Louis Vuitton and Gucci.

Prices for some of these bags range from RM7,000 to RM100,000 each.

When contacted, MACC deputy chief commissioner (operations) Datuk Azam Baki confirmed the arrests of Mohd Arif, 59, and his 29-year-old son at their home at 8am yesterday.

He said the case was being investigated for abuse of power, corruption and money laundering.



Raid target: MACC officers arrested Mohd Arif at his house in Subang Jaya as he was about to leave for work.

The MACC is said to be investigating whether all his overseas trips and other expenses incurred there were paid for by "certain individuals".

A source said Mohd Arif just returned from a golfing trip to the United States.

"More suspects will be picked up soon to assist in the probe," Azam said.

Mohd Arif and his son are expected to be remanded this morning.

It is understood that MACC is investigating 38 savings and current accounts and at least three safe deposit boxes in several banks in connection with the case.

The probe also covers several plots of lands.

The source said several documents from a lawyer's office in Puchong related to the plots of land were also seized.

It is learnt that statements had also been recorded from Mohd Arif's 57-year-old wife, his 32-year-old daughter and another son aged 34.

The couple has six children.



Car and cash: A Proton Perdana is seen parked outside the house of Mohd Arif.

Attempts to contact Mohd Arif for comments were unsuccessful.

A visit to his double-storey terrace corner lot home at about 7pm showed that no one was present.

Three luxury cars were parked in the porch. The housing area is a gated and guarded community.

A Proton Perdana was parked in front of the house.

Mohd Arif was appointed to the ministry post on Oct 16, 2015. He also sits in the board of a government-linked company.

Prior to that, he also served as a secretary-general in another ministry and was a deputy secretary-general and state financial officer.

He joined the civil service in 1981 as an administrative and diplomatic officer and is a Universiti Malaya graduate.

5. Falcon Bank's ex-Singapore branch manager slapped with 16 1MDB-related charges

SINGAPORE: Singapore authorities have charged Falcon Private Bank's former Singapore branch manager Jens Sturzenegger with 16 offences relating to Singapore's probe into Malaysian state fund, 1Malaysia Development Bhd (1MDB). He is expected to plead guilty on Jan 11, it was disclosed in a Singapore court on Thursday.

In October last year, Falcon Bank became the second bank to be closed down by Singapore regulators over 1MDB connections, after BSI in May.

Sturzenegger is the fourth person charged in Singapore amid global-wide probes into money-laundering and corruption at the Malaysian fund. 1MDB has consistently denied any wrongdoing.

On Wednesday, the lawyer for Yeo Jiawei, a former BSI banker found guilty of attempting to tamper with witnesses in an 1MDB-related case, said he will appeal his conviction and sentence.

Yeo, 34, was sentenced on Dec 22 to a 30-month jail term, the longest yet handed down by a Singapore court in 1MDB-related cases. He also faces money-laundering charges, set to be heard in court this April.

Yeo is the third former BSI banker to be found guilty in the city's 1MDB investigations.

Yak Yew Chee was sentenced in November to an 18-week jail term and fined for forging documents and failing to disclose suspicious transactions allegedly related to Malaysian financier Low Taek Jho. His subordinate, Yvonne Seah Yew Foong, was jailed for two weeks and fined on Dec 16 for similar offenses. Yak and Seah didn't file appeals, according to their lawyers. - The Straits Times/Asia News Network.

6. Rural and Regional Development Ministry to cooperate in MACC probe



PUTRAJAYA: The Rural and Regional Development Ministry says it will extend cooperation to the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) in the investigation into alleged abuse of power and corruption by its secretary-general Datuk Mohd Arif Ab Rahman.

Minister Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob (pix) said in a statement Thursday that the ministry supported MACC's efforts to combat corruption and irregularities.

Mohd Arif, 59, and his two sons, aged 29 and 34, have been remanded for seven days up to Jan 11 to assist in the MACC probe.

The secretary-general was arrested at his house in USJ Subang Jaya at 8am Wednesday.

His sons were detained when they came to the MACC headquarters to have their statements taken.

7. Facebook showoffs can be booked

PETALING JAYA: Civil servants and their wives who post pictures of expensive items such as branded handbags and watches, as well as expensive family holidays, could be giving themselves away.

The Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) has been following these social media postings especially on Facebook and Instagram.

Besides high-ranking officials on holidays that include overseas golf trips, the middle and lower ranking ones are also being monitored as, in some cases, their lifestyles are not commensurate with their earnings.

The Star has been informed that in one particular case in Sabah, a group of civil servants who went to London on a holiday became the talking point when they showed off their holidays on Facebook.

According to a state MACC source, the commission does follow up leads from Facebook postings on people living beyond their means. Postings of expensive overseas holidays on Facebook raises questions if the person, particularly a civil servant, looks to be living beyond his or her means.

"We do look into it. We can consider them as initial information to carry out further checks. If it warrants an investigation, then we will probe," said the source, who declined to say if anyone had been found to be involved in corrupt practices or charged in court based on leads obtained via Facebook. "We cannot check all postings but mostly the public does send them to us and it is taken as a first information," he said.

MACC deputy chief commissioner (operations) Datuk Azam Baki confirmed that they were watching such social media postings by show-off civil servants.

"We also rely on our public tip offs and our own intelligence gathering to investigate such cases," he said, adding that it was a huge task as there were 1.6 million civil servants.

He said there was nothing wrong with civil servants and their family members owning luxury handbags and branded watches.

"But having one too many Hermes, Chanel or Louis Vuitton bags will raise eyebrows and suspicion as to the source of their wealth.

"If civil servants or their family members are having more than a dozen and flaunt them around, then we would like to know where they got the money to buy those bags.

Azam was asked to comment on recent investigations of alleged corruption where a host of luxury items were seized from several high-ranking civil servants.

In the latest case involving a federal ministry's secretary-general on Wednesday, some 150 handbags and watches were seized from his home in Subang Jaya.

Last October, jewellery worth RM3.64mil and designer handbags worth RM500,000 were confiscated from two senior Sabah Water Department officials.

Azam said the MACC would also work closely with other authorities such as the Immigration Department to check on how frequently these senior officials travelled overseas with their family members and the reasons for the trips.

"These are some of the indicators we used as part of our probe against those living beyond their means," he said.

On Tuesday, Azam told *MACC.fm*, the commission's online radio service that civil servants who fly abroad in business class to play golf and have liaisons with girlfriends or mistresses were being probed.

He said these were among indicators used by the MACC against officials who were corrupt and abused their power.

8. More gold and cash seized by MACC

PETALING JAYA: More gold and cash with an estimated value of RM2.6mil have been recovered by the MACC in their investigations into the alleged abuse of power, corruption and money laundering involving Rural and Regional Development Ministry secretary-general Datuk Mohd Arif Ab Rahman, even as Mohd Arif and two of his sons were remanded for seven days.

The seizure was in addition to the estimated RM3mil in gold bars and Australian and Euro currencies that were seized from Mohd Arif on Wednesday.

MACC officials said the gold and cash were found after a team of MACC officers opened up a safe deposit box in a bank that contained about 8kg of gold valued at RM1.6mil.

In addition, several other safe deposit boxes from another few banks also saw the seizure of RM1mil in cash, including A\$80,000 (about RM260,000).

"We also towed back a multi-purpose vehicle - a Toyota Estima - owned by the suspect's son from his Subang Jaya house.

"Records showed there are more than 10 plots of land registered under the family's name around the Klang Valley," said the officials

The value of the land has yet to be determined and the MACC is checking if the properties were amassed through corrupt practices.

The MACC will also be checking with the Inland Revenue Board to ascertain if the suspect had evaded paying any taxes since 2010.

MACC deputy chief commissioner (operations) Datuk Azam Baki said that so far, no new arrest had been made but more witnesses would be sought.

The commission sprang a surprise yesterday when it applied to have another of Mohd Arif's sons remanded.

On Wednesday, when the commission announced Mohd Ariff's arrest, it only mentioned that his 29-year-old son had been detained.

However, when it applied to remand Mohd Arif, 59, at the Putrajaya magistrate's court yesterday, a 34-year-old son was also included in the application.

Magistrate Nik Isfahanie Tasnim W. Ab Rahman allowed the application and issued a three-day remanded order.

MACC deputy public prosecutor Ahmad Akram Gharib said the father and sons were being investigated under Section 23 of the MACC Act 2009 for abuse of power, Section 165 of the Penal Code and the Anti-Money Laundering Act. His sons were also being investigated for abetment.

Clad in orange coloured T-shirts bearing the words "LOKAP SPRM", the three arrived at the court here in separate cars at 9.40am yesterday, covering their faces with clothing.

Arif is not the first secretary-general of the ministry to have a run-in with the law.

Former Rural Development Ministry secretary-general Datuk Dr Abdul Aziz Muhamad was sentenced to 10 years' jail for abetment of criminal breach of trust (CBT) and cheating involving RM9mil of Terengganu Tengah Development Authority (Ketengah) funds.

Dr Abdul Aziz, who was then 61, was convicted by the Sessions Court in 2005 but was later freed on appeal.

MACC officials nabbed Mohd Arif at his home in USJ3, Subang Jaya, on Wednesday morning just as he was about to leave for work. His two sons were arrested at the MACC headquarters here after they were called in for questioning on the same day.

9. The powerful RM100mil men of the ministries

PETALING JAYA: Ministry secretaries-general are powerful people, with authority to dole out huge sums of money. A secretary-general can sign contracts worth up to RM100mil.

The limit can be raised even higher with permission from the Finance Ministry.

"The RM100mil limit was fixed for all ministries by the Finance Ministry," said Health Ministry secretary-general Datuk Seri Dr Chen Chaw Min.

"If any ministry wants to raise the limit, they have to get permission from the Finance Ministry," he added.

According to the Government Contracts Act 1949 (Act 120), all government contracts may be signed by a Minister or by any public officer duly authorised in writing by the respective Minister.

In the 2014 Auditor-General's Report, a former Ministry of Agriculture and Agro-Based Industries (MOA) secretary-general had signed off on a RM268.222mil deal with a private firm in 2012 despite having no authority to do.

This went against a 2009 circular by the Government that an MOA secretary-general can only sign contracts of between RM20mil and RM100mil.

The MOA later admitted it made an error and that the matter was not done intentionally.

Former Public Accounts Committee (PAC) chairman Datuk Nur Jazlan Mohamed said all senior officers at a ministry must take the lead role to ensure there was no hanky-panky in procurement and awarding of contracts.

"The PAC and Auditor-General only looks at whether there is compliance with procedures. It's up to the ministry to take action over misdeeds," said Nur Jazlan, who is Deputy Home Minister.

PAC deputy chairman Dr Tan Seng Giaw said there were already enough laws and procedures to govern the duties and responsibilities of chief secretaries.

Dr Tan said the PAC would usually recommend further investigations into cases of mismanagement and may also include the Malaysian Anti Corruption Commission stepping in if elements of corruption or abuse of power were found.

A source said secretaries-general do not have the power to approve projects on their own. All projects must be put through a tender board which will comprise various committees, including financial and technical.

The officers involved in the tender process will also come from other ministries such as the Finance Ministry.

Approval from the Finance Ministry is also required before any project is done via direct negotiation or restricted tender.

The source said the ceiling amount that other senior ministry officials can sign will vary according to ministries. This is because some ministries have bigger budgets and, as such, the value of contracts are larger than others.

As an example, Education Minister Datuk Seri Mahdzir Khalid, in a notice on Aug 26 last year, authorised the ministry's secretary-general to sign on behalf of the Government contracts of works, supplies and services worth up to RM100mil.

The ministry deputy secretary-general was authorised to sign for contracts worth up to RM50mil.

10. Guan Eng seeks to declare Section 62 of MACC Act 'unconstitutional'



GEORGE TOWN: Penang Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng (pic) will file a motion on Friday to declare Section 62 of the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) Act as "unconstitutional".

Lim's lawyer Gobind Singh Deo said the section contradicted an accused's right to remain silent.

Section 62 of the MACC Act deals with delivery of the defence's statement.

It states that the defence's statement and documents to be tendered as evidence must be delivered before commencement of the trial.

Businesswoman Phang Li Koon, who is charged with abetment, filed a similar motion on Wednesday.

When the case came up for case management on Friday, DPP Masri Mohd Daud informed the court that the prosecution had received the documents pertaining to the motion filed by Phang.

High Court Justice Hadhariah Syed Ismail fixed Feb 7 to hear the two motions.

Some 60 prosecution witnesses are expected to be called to testify during Lim's 34-day corruption trial between March and July.

The trial is to run from March 27 to 31, April 10 to 14, April 24 to 28, May 15 to 19, May 29 to June 2, June 13 to 16 and July 17 to 21.

Lim is charged with obtaining gratification for himself and his wife Betty Chew by approving the conversion of two lots of agricultural land belonging to Magnificent Emblem into residential development while chairing a state Planning Committee meeting on July 18, 2014.

The offence under Section 23 of the MACC Act carries a jail term of up to 20 years and a fine of at least five times the value of gratification or RM10,000, whichever is higher.

He faces another charge under Section 165 of the Penal Code of using his position to obtain gratification by purchasing his bungalow in Pinhorn Road from Phang at RM2.8mil, which was below the market value of RM4.27mil, on July 28, 2015.

The offence is punishable by a maximum of two years in jail or a fine, or both.

Phang, 44, who is charged with abetment, faces up to two years in jail or a fine, or both.

Both Lim and Phang, who were not present in court on Friday, have pleaded not guilty to the charges.

Their cases will be jointly heard.

11. Unearthing more dirt on Mohd Arif



MACC officers escorting Mohd Arif at the magistrate's court in Putrajaya on Thursday.

PETALING JAYA: The Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) is zeroing in on 10 plots of land acquired by Datuk Mohd Arif Ab Rahman when he was serving with the Selangor state government.

Sources said the MACC would scrutinise the files on transactions involving the properties, some of which involve commercial land, in order to determine how and when the secretary-general of the Rural and Regional Development Ministry bought them.

"We believe the plots of land were acquired when the suspect was holding the position of Subang Jaya Municipal Council president in 2005 and as Selangor financial officer in 2007.

"All the plots of land are located in Selangor and we have reason to believe that he could have used his position in power to amass the properties," said a source.

The MACC will also trace back projects when the suspect was the Agriculture and Agro-based Industries Ministry secretary-general to find out whether any were given out in exchange for favours.

The sources said records showed the suspect conducted all his dealings using only two methods - cash and gold bars - adding that the family also trades in gold bars, raking in hefty profits over the years.

It is learnt that the family, due to their wealth, would usually pay for airfares using their own money when going on holiday trips overseas.

"But we are checking whether other parties sponsored their other expenses upon arrival at the overseas destinations," another source said.

So far, stacks of documents have been seized in relation to the probe which is centred on corruption, abuse of power and money laundering.

MACC deputy chief commissioner (operations) Datuk Azam Baki said investigations were still in the initial stage.

"No arrest yet but very soon. Give us some time," he said.

On Wednesday, the MACC arrested Mohd Arif at his Subang Jaya home just as he was about to leave for work.

His two sons were arrested at the MACC headquarters in Putrajaya after they were called in for questioning.

Officers who conducted a 12-hour search at Mohd Arif's house found gold bars, 150 luxury handbags, branded watches and foreign currencies.

The anti-graft body is also working with the Inland Revenue Board to ascertain if the Datuk had evaded paying taxes since 2010.

12. Ex-CEO of government agency picked up by MACC

PETALING JAYA: The former chief executive officer of a government agency has been picked up by the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC).

MACC officers detained the 62-year-old suspect at his Bukit Bandaraya, Shah Alam house at 5.15pm on Sunday

The suspect - who is also the former managing director of a government agency and a Datuk - allegedly solicited a RM36,000 bribe.

Meanwhile, MACC deputy chief commissioner (operations) Datuk Azam Baki confirmed the arrest and added that the suspect would be charged in the Shah Alam sessions court on Monday.

It has also since been reported by Bernama that the suspect was the chief executive officer and managing director of the National Entrepreneurial Group Economic Fund (TEKUN Nasional).

13. **MACC to visit PKNS soon over Mohd Arif graft probe**

PETALING JAYA: The Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) will visit PKNS "very soon" in relation to an on-going probe against the secretary-general of a federal ministry.

It is learnt that official documents from the PKNS or Selangor State Development Corporation records are pertinent to determine the dealings involving some 10 plots of land acquired by Datuk Mohd Arif Ab Rahman when he was serving with the Selangor government.

Another arduous task is awaiting the graft-busters as they get down to the business of tracing hundreds of documents kept in the confidential records there.

Mohd Arif, who is the secretary-general of the Rural and Regional Development Ministry since his appointment on Oct 16, 2015, is under investigation for alleged corruption, abuse of power and money laundering.

Prior to this, he was the Agriculture and Agro-based Industries Ministry secretary-general.

It is learnt that the MACC wanted to make sure all the plots of land in Selangor were bought in accordance with the "right procedures".

"Some of the land are registered under the suspect's wife and children, so we need to verify all purchases were clean," said a source.

Mohd Arif was Subang Jaya Municipal Council president in 2005 and Selangor financial officer in 2007.

MACC deputy chief commissioner (operations) Datuk Azam Baki said his officers were gathering evidence and would seize more documents as the probe progresses.

It is learnt that contractors and vendors awarded contracts when Mohd Arif was serving under the previous and present ministries would be called up soon.

Last week, Mohd Arif, 59, and two of his sons, aged 29 and 34, were detained in connection with the probe.

So far, cash and gold bars worth more than RM6mil have been seized, in addition to 150 luxury handbags and watches.

Yesterday, *The Star* wrongly referred to Mohd Arif as secretary-general of the Agriculture and Agro-based Industries Ministry in a story when it was actually his former position.

On Friday, Rural and Regional Development Minister Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob urged the public not to speculate on the arrest of Mohd Arif.

Ismail Sabri said MACC should be allowed to do its job without interference.

Recently, in the country's biggest corruption case dubbed Sabah Watergate, the MACC took almost three months to pore over tens of thousands of documents and over 8,000 payment vouchers from between 2008 and 2016.

14. More cash found in Mohd Arif's house



Loads of cash: The foreign currencies seized by the MACC officers at Mohd Arif's house in Subang Jaya.

PETALING JAYA: Foreign currencies worth about RM550,000 were the latest seizure made in the house of Datuk Mohd Arif Ab Rahman by a team of graft-busters in a follow-up visit.

The cash was in various denominations of British pound, Euros and Singaporean dollars.

It is learnt that the currencies were initially in the room of Mohd Arif's wife before these were taken out and kept in their maid's room for "safekeeping".

Rural and Regional Development Ministry secretary-general Mohd Arif's house in USJ 3, Subang Jaya, is a huge double-storey terrace corner lot with at least eight rooms.

"We believe the currencies were taken out by the suspect's fourth son with the intention to smuggle them out to a relative's house later.

"But a team from the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) visited the house again today (yesterday) to conduct further checks and stumbled upon the hidden cash," said a source.

A statement has been recorded from the suspect's fourth son, who is in his 20s, on the seizure of cash to assist in investigations.

To date, there is no new arrest in relation to the case.

MACC deputy chief commissioner (operations) Datuk Azam Baki confirmed the latest seizure.

He said more time was needed for his officers to work on the probe, centring on allegations of corruption, abuse of power and money laundering that dated back to 2010.

On Wednesday, the MACC arrested Mohd Arif at his home just as he was about to leave for work.

His two other sons, aged 29 and 34, were also arrested at the MACC headquarters in Putrajaya after they were called in for questioning. All three have been remanded until Jan 11 to help in the probe.

Officers who had earlier conducted a 12-hour search at Mohd Arif's house found gold bars and foreign currencies, estimated at RM3mil, in addition to 150 luxury handbags and branded watches.

In a follow-up bust, another RM2.6mil worth of gold bars and cash were also confiscated from safe deposit boxes in several banks.

The MACC was also in the midst of tracing some 10 plots of land acquired by Mohd Arif when he was serving under the Selangor state government.

15. PM: MACC arrests serve as reminder to civil servants



Najib addressing the PM's Department monthly gathering in Putrajaya

PUTRAJAYA: The recent arrests made by the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) are a reminder to civil servants against wastage, said Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak.

The Prime Minister said wastage "is equal to taking away what belongs to the people," and he reminded those in government that they cannot take away the people's rights.

"What the MACC has done this past few days reminds us about wastage. About taking away the rights of the rakyat.

"Don't take away the rights of the rakyat. It belongs to them.

"Remember that when we deliver our programmes, it is for the people. So whenever there is wastage, the people will be disappointed and will lose confidence in you," Najib said at the Prime Minister's Department monthly assembly Monday.

Last week, the MACC detained Rural and Regional Development Ministry secretary-general Datuk Mohd Arif Ab Rahman and his two sons for alleged corruption, money-laundering and abuse of power.

Najib also told officers at the PM's Department to make 2017 the "year of delivery".

"Let's make 'delivery' our focus this year. Everyone must play their role in delivering programmes or projects that are beneficial for the well-being of the people.

"Projects must be delivered according to schedule. If you encounter obstacles that will affect the delivery of your project, find solutions.

"Don't stay in your own silos. If we can change our mindsets, then we can succeed in 2017," he said.

He said there are "signs" that 2017 would be a better year economically compared to 2016.

"The price of crude oil, palm oil and rubber has improved.

"As for our currency, which has become a source of concern, it must be noted that out of 149 world currencies, 123 are facing declines against the US dollar, so we are not the only ones affected.

"But with the steps taken by Bank Negara, there is optimism that we can face this volatility," said Najib.

16. Immigration audit exposes RM1mil fraud



Nabbed: Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission officers escorting four Immigration officers out from the Shah Alam magistrate's court after they were remanded for six days. — KK SHAM/The Star

PETALING JAYA: Four Selangor Immigration officers were entrusted to receive and process applications for international passports.

Having access to the applicant database, they did much more than their job scope.

The quartet would pocket the RM200 international passport application fee received over the counter by "converting" the paid applications to that submitted by OKU (disabled) persons, who are entitled to free passports.

The officers had been pocketing large sums this way since 2014, with about RM1mil siphoned off.

An internal audit exposed the ruse recently.

The Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) raided the Selangor Immigration Department office in Shah Alam at 3.30pm on Monday and detained the four officers, two of them women.

The four suspects were brought to the Shah Alam magistrate's court to be remanded for six days.

The investigation is under Section 18 of the MACC Act 2009 which involves submission of false claims with intention to deceive.

MACC deputy chief commissioner (operations) Datuk Azam Baki confirmed the arrests, describing the case as "very serious and warranting a very thorough probe."

"We do not rule out the possibility that such fraud may also be occurring in other Immigration offices all over the country.

"This is not an isolated case and must be addressed," he said.

An MACC official said the suspects were believed to be involved in the submission of payment vouchers with falsified information.

"The record is altered to show that the applicant is an OKU when he or she is not," the official added.

Immigration director-general Datuk Seri Mustafar Ali said full cooperation had been extended to MACC, and had shared the outcome of its internal audit.

17. Chief Secretary backs MACC blitz on civil service

PUTRAJAYA: The anti-graft blitz against high-ranking civil servants has received the full backing of the country's top-ranked public officer.

Chief Secretary to the Government Tan Sri Dr Ali Hamsa said he fully supported the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission's (MACC) drive to weed out corruption in the civil service and its focus on senior officers who went on overseas golfing sprees.

"We are against corruption and support the MACC to stamp it out," he told a press conference yesterday.

"Playing golf as a hobby is not wrong for civil servants. But when you do it with contractors who want to treat you in the hope of getting a favour, it goes against our integrity code," he said.

Dr Ali Hamsa also announced that Datuk Mohd Arif Ab Rahman has been suspended as Rural and Regional Development Ministry secretary-general and placed in the civil service pool.

He said Mohd Arif, who is under investigation for abuse of power and money-laundering, was entitled to full pay while being investigated.

18. Cops nabbed for soliciting RM5,000 bribe



KOTA KINABALU: A police sergeant and a sub-inspector have been arrested by graft busters for allegedly receiving RM5,000 from a man in Sandakan.

The two policemen, both aged 50, are believed to have received the money as a "reward" for settling a fight.

On Monday, a 34-year-old labourer approached Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) officials after meeting the two policemen in Sandakan town.

The labourer reported to MACC officials that the sub-inspector and sergeant had demanded the money to settle a fight that occurred on Dec 8 last year.

Both policemen are being held at the Sandakan police district headquarters. Their statements will be recorded on Wednesday.

Sabah MACC director Shaharom Nizam Abdul Manap confirmed the arrests when contacted late Tuesday.

19. Remand extended for ministry sec-gen and son in graft probe

PUTRAJAYA: The Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission has been granted extra time to quiz Datuk Mohd Arif Ab Rahman (*pic*) over allegations of corruption.

Magistrate Nik Isfahanie Tasnim Wan Ab Rahman on Wednesday allowed for the Rural and Regional Development Ministry secretary-general and his 34-year-old son to be remanded for another four days as investigators continue to probe Mohd Arif over alleged corruption, money-laundering and abuse of power.

Mohd Arif's 29-year-old son was released on bail.

The three arrived at the magistrate's court here at 9.55am in separate cars. They all had their faces covered.

Mohd Arif was arrested by MACC officers at his home in USJ3, Subang Jaya on Wednesday, last week.

His two sons were arrested at the MACC headquarters here after they were called in for questioning on the same day.

The following day, the magistrate's court accepted MACC's request for the three to be remanded for seven days to facilitate investigations.

Investigators have so far found cash and gold bars worth more than RM6mil, in addition to 150 luxury handbags and watches.

Titles of land plots around Klang Valley, registered under Mohd Arif's family members' names, were also found.

20. State govt officer denies taking bribe

JOHOR BARU: A state government officer was charged at the Sessions Court here with accepting a bribe of RM150,000.

Ahmad Ehwan Ahmad, 56, who is an assistant officer with the Johor Baru Land District Office, pleaded not guilty before Sessions judge Mohd Fauzi Mohd Nasir yesterday.

He allegedly accepted the amount from businessman Toh Ang Poo, 49, where the amount was deposited into his Affin Bank account located along Jalan Kebun Teh 1, Kebun Teh Commercial Centre on Sept 5 last year.

According to the charge, Ahmad Ehwan had knowledge that Toh was involved in several application for permits to transfer rock materials.

The offence carries a maximum imprisonment of two years or a fine or both, upon conviction.

Judge Mohd Fauzi set the bail amount at RM30,000 and Feb 14 for the mention of the case.

He also ordered the accused to surrender his passport to the court.

Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) deputy public prosecution officer Amir Nasruddin prosecuted while lawyers Azrul Zulkifli Stork and Mohd Tarmeze Mohd Taib represented the accused. Ahmad Ehwan posted bail.

21. Mohd Arif and son's remand extended

PUTRAJAYA: The Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) has been granted more time in its investigation into Datuk Mohd Arif Ab Rahman's corruption case.

The anti-graft body had the remand on the Rural and Regional Development Ministry secretary-general and his 34-year-old son extended for another four days, as investigators continue to quiz the suspects over alleged corruption, money-laundering and abuse of power.

Magistrate Nik Isfahanie Tasnim Ab Rahman yesterday granted the request made by MACC deputy public prosecutor Amer Abu Bakar Abdullah.

Mohd Arif's 29-year-old son was released on MACC bail of RM10,000.

Last Wednesday, Mohd Arif was arrested by MACC officers at his home in USJ3, Subang Jaya.

His two sons were arrested at the MACC headquarters here after they were called in for questioning on the same day.

The following day, the magistrate's court allowed the three to be remanded for seven days to assist investigations.

Investigators have so far found cash and gold bars worth more than RM6mil in addition to luxury handbags and watches.

Titles of land plots around Klang Valley, registered under Mohd Arif's family members' names, were also found, which were believed to be acquired while he was serving the Selangor government.

Mohd Arif was the Subang Jaya Municipal Council president in 2005 and Selangor financial officer in 2007.

It is said that Mohd Arif's name was proposed for Selangor state secretary, but the proposal was rejected by the palace, who chose Datuk Mohd Kusrin Munawi instead.

22. MACC monitoring Sabah school heads

KOTA KINABALU: The Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) has been monitoring and investigating a number of headmasters and principals in Sabah for the past two years.

State Education Department director Datuk Maimunah Suhaibul said the matter was among the issues discussed when Sabah MACC director Datuk Shaharom Nizam Abd Manap visited the department Wednesday.

"We talked about suspected involvement of our headmasters and principals on graft-related cases but no numbers were mentioned in the meeting," she said at an event here Thursday.

"Our department is urging MACC officials to brief district education officers to ensure that they are on the right track," she said.

Maimunah urged teachers and staff in the education service to declare their assets, cut down on overseas vacations and refrain from giving projects or tenders to family members.

She said that by declaring assets which may have been handed down through the generations, individuals will not be suspected of dubious activities that may have earned them extraordinary wealth.

"We want our staff and officials to have integrity, not abuse their powers and uphold the dignity of the department," she added.

23. MACC expected to wrap up probe into Iris Corp execs



PETALING JAYA: The Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) is expected to wrap up investigations into two corporate figures at a government-linked company because their remand expires tomorrow.

Iris Corp Bhd deputy managing director and acting chief executive officer Datuk Hamdan Mohd Hassan (pic), 58, and an international sales manager, 36, have been remanded since Friday.

They are being probed for suspected corruption, abuse of power and money laundering.

Iris Corp has since suspended Hassan's executive powers pending the end of the investigation.

In a filing with Bursa Malaysia on Jan 20, Iris Corp said Hamdan was alleged to have abused his power and to have been involved in corrupt practices involving the e-passport project for the Republic of Guinea government.

The company confirmed that it had signed a 15-year contract with the Republic of Guinea to implement the e-passport facility there.

The firm's website showed that the contract, worth RM793.21mil, was inked in February 2014.

Iris Corp added that Hamdan's remand would not have any effect on the earnings and net assets of the company for the financial years ending March 31, 2017 and 2018.

Hamdan's responsibilities as acting CEO will be taken over by the newly-minted chief operating officer Choong Choo Hock.

He was appointed to the position on Jan 12.

Hamdan was nabbed at his home in Tropicana Indah on Jan 19 and several bank accounts amounting to some RM1mil have been frozen.

The accounts were in the names of Hamdan, his wife and children.

The international sales manager was picked up at his residence in Taman Desa, Jalan Klang Lama, in a MACC operation codenamed Ops Guinea.

Sources said the two men were believed to have received bribes between 2013 and 2015 from the owner of a private overseas-based firm and allegedly pocketed RM500,000, mostly in US dollars and euros.

24. Five Felda officials remanded in RM47.6mil sturgeon project probe



The Felda officials in lock-up uniform being led into the magistrate's court in Putrajaya

PUTRAJAYA: Five current and former Felda officials have been remanded as part of investigations into alleged corruption and power abuse.

Magistrate Nik Isfahanie Tasnim Wan Ab Rahman on Wednesday allowed the five to be remanded for a week under Section 18 of the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) Act.

The five were brought to the magistrate's court by MACC officers at 9am, clad in the "Lokap SPRM" t-shirt.

The five are Felda's former director-general, ex-deputy director-general (strategic resources), the former operations officer in charge of its sturgeon farming project in Taman Negara, the current head of its London Properties and an assistant administration officer.

Felda is the latest government-linked company (GLC) to be investigated by the MACC. The officers were believed to have committed corruption over a sturgeon-farming project worth RM47.6mil.

They were picked up in a sting operation, dubbed Ops Caviar, between 11.30am and 6pm in several locations around Klang Valley on Tuesday.

Valuable items, including a luxury car and jewellery estimated to be worth millions, were seized during the raids.

More items are expected to be seized as anti-graft officers visit their homes and obtain details of their assets. The personal accounts of their immediate family members are to be frozen as part of investigations.

25. MACC chief warns corrupt politicians to be careful

PETALING JAYA: Corrupt politicians have been warned to "be careful" by Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) chief commissioner Datuk Dzulkifli Ahmad.

In a live television interview on Thursday, Dzulkifli said he had previously said that he would take action on anyone who carried out corrupt practices, adding that it included "politicians of any rank".

"On my 100th day as MACC chief, I said that I will not be stopped from taking action on politicians.

"Tonight, I would like to say to corrupt politicians, just you wait (tunggulah)," he said.

Dzulkifli added that the MACC was not worried about "protected individuals" who commit systemic corruption.

"There is no issue about them being protected, I can guarantee that all those who commit corruption will not be left alone. I will take action against them without fear or favour," he reiterated.

Dzulkifli, however, added that the MACC does have its own limitations.

"There are only 2,900 members and officers in the whole of the MACC, of which only 900 carry out legal enforcement as others are in the prevention and education departments, among others.

"Now if you look at civil service alone, there are 1.6mil of them, so that is one.

"Besides that is budget, that has been cut and it is at its lowest since 2013," he said.

Dzulkifli, however, added that he would not allow the limitations to stop the anti-graft body from carrying out its duties.

Thursday's television appearance marked his first ever live interview since his appointment in July last year.

Dzulkifli, a veteran in the civil service, was the head of the National Revenue Recovery Enforcement Team of the Attorney-General's Chambers before being appointed MACC chief commissioner.

He took over from Tan Sri Abu Kassim Mohamed.

26. Engineer released on MACC bail of RM100,000

ALOR SETAR: A Public Works Department assistant senior engineer, who was remanded for alleged corruption in connection with road maintenance and upgrading projects, has been released on a Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) bail of RM100,000.

An MACC source said the 56-year-old suspect was released at about noon Monday, a day before his six-day remand expired on Tuesday.

"The suspect was released on RM100,000 bail with two sureties until Feb 13 pending completion of investigations," said Kedah MACC director Datuk Mohd Fouzi Mohammed when contacted.

The MACC arrested the suspect at his house on Jan 18 for allegedly receiving bribes from a contractor for approving road construction and maintenance contracts in the Sik district since 2012.

Two days later, during an inspection, cash amounting to RM1.1mil was found in plastic containers and chocolate tins stashed inside the wooden wall of a master bedroom in the suspect's house.