

The Star November 2017

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1. Johor DOSH assistant director remanded seven days in graft

JOHOR BARU: A state Department of Occupational Safety and Health (DOSH) senior officer has been remanded for seven days over allegations of accepting a RM30,000 bribe.

Magistrate Mohd Azlan Shah Mohd Allias allowed the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission's (MACC) application on Wednesday for the 37-year-old department deputy assistant director to be held for a week.

The suspect was taken to the magistrate's court here by MACC officers at around 1.55pm.

He was arrested by MACC officers at a hotel around here at around 2.40pm on Tuesday (Oct 31) for allegedly requesting the sum from a project manager of a petroleum engineering company.

During a raid conducted at the suspect's house, the investigation team also found RM18,505 in cash hidden underneath the stairs and in the bedroom.

The team also seized several documents related to the project.

2. Two clerks on trial over Touch 'n' Go top-up theft



PUTRAJAYA: Two clerks were charged at a magistrate's court here with 235 counts of stealing Touch 'n' Go top-ups by using seven cards to reload more than RM15,000 from a machine belonging to the National Audit Department.

Farizah Nekmat has claimed trial to 69 charges of reloading the cards totalling RM5,137, while Normaidzatulaqma Iskandar has pleaded not guilty to 166 similar charges amounting to RM12,676.

They were allegedly stealing the top-ups worth between RM1 and RM100 at Level 2, management sector, National Audit Department, Presint 2 here from Dec 2 last year to April 24 this year.

Both were charged under Section 380 of the Penal Code which carries a maximum of 10 years' jail and a possible fine, and for the subsequent offence, punishable with a jail sentence and a fine or whipping, if convicted.

In asking for a lower bail, Farizah, 37, said she has three children aged between two and 17 and has to support her mother, adding that her husband also supported his parents.

Meanwhile Normaidzatulaqma, 36, told the court that she was a single mother with an RM1,200 monthly salary and has to support four children aged between eight and 18, adding that she needed to pay off her former husband's debts.

Deputy Public Prosecutor Muhammad Izzat Fauzan proposed a higher bail, saying there was a possibility the accused would abscond as they were facing many charges.

Magistrate Azizah fixed bail at RM8,000 in one surety for Farizah and RM14,000 bail in one surety for Normaidzatulaqma, pending mention on Dec 5.

She also ordered the accused to report at the nearest police station on the first day of each month and surrender their passports pending the disposal of the case.

3. MACC questions Shafie again



Datuk Seri Shafie Apdal

KOTA KINABALU: Datuk Seri Shafie Apdal was questioned further by the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) on Monday.

The Parti Warisan Sabah president spent about four hours being quizzed by MACC officers at their office here, according to sources.

Shafie, the former rural and regional development minister, arrived at the Kota Kinabalu MACC on Jalan Sulaman at about 10am and left shortly before 2pm.

Shafie was among 13 people arrested in October in connection with a graft probe into the alleged skimming of up to RM1.5bil in federal project allocations in Sabah through the Rural and Regional Development Ministry.

The money was allegedly siphoned from RM7.5bil worth of project funds.

4. MACC calls up several Kedah footballers over Malaysia Cup match-fixing allegations



Kedah fans during the Malaysia Cup final recently.

ALOR SETAR: Several Kedah footballers have been called in by the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Agency (MACC) over allegations of match-fixing in the Malaysia Cup final against Johor Darul Ta'zim (JDT) last Saturday (Nov 4).

Kedah Football Association (KFA) president Datuk Seri Ahmad Bashah Md Hanipah said that he welcomed the action by the MACC and said that he hoped the investigations could be sped up.

"I was told the MACC called several players and I see that as a normal matter when there are allegations of corruption. It is their right to investigate these issues and call up people in the course of the investigation," he said on Saturday (Nov 11).

He said that the allegation was not made by the KFA but by netizens, adding that he hoped the claims that have gone viral could be cleared up to preserve the organisation's good name.

An allegation that has gone viral online claimed that seven Lang Merah players received RM200,000 bribes each for the final held at the Shah Alam Stadium.

5. Contractors acquitted of corruption, abetment involving RM135,000

ALOR SETAR: Two contractors were acquitted of three separate counts of corruption and abetment involving RM135,000 at the Sessions Court here.

Sessions judge Zanol Rashid Hussain ordered Nor Azamuddin Ahmad, 48, and Farid Idris Khan, 37, to be released Sunday, saying that the defence had successfully cast a reasonable doubt in the case.

Nor Azamuddin was alleged to have received RM45,000 on each occasion from Datuk Noridan Spee Yee.

This was allegedly to help Noridan, the proprietor of DCT Bakery Sdn Bhd, to obtain a quota of 100 metric tonnes of ST15 grade rice for May, June and July 2014, from the Agriculture and Agro-based Industry Ministry.

Farid was charged with abetting Nor Azamuddin in committing the offences.

The offences under Section 16 of the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) Act 2009, carry a jail sentence of up to 20 years, fine of not less than five times the total value of the bribe, or RM10,000, whichever is higher.

State MACC Deputy Public Prosecutor A. Hafiizh Abu Bakar prosecuted while both accused were represented by C.P. Ang.

6. MACC chief keeping those guilty of graft in suspense

KENINGAU: The Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) is probing several high-profile cases pending approval from the Attorney-General's Chambers for prosecution in court, but is not revealing any details.

"Let us wait. If I make it known, then there is no suspense. This is what is feared by those involved in corruption. Will they be probed next week?" Chief Commissioner Tan Sri Dzulkifli Ahmad told reporters at the 'Ziarah Kasih' programme here on Sunday (Nov 12).

About 5,000 people attended the MACC programme, which was launched by Sabah Deputy Chief Minister Tan Sri Joseph Pairin Kitingan.

Dzulkifli said the fight against corruption and abuse of power by agencies was not exclusive to the MACC but needed the involvement of all Malaysians to ensure that the country is free of it.

"The MACC is a government agency representing the people to ensure that the government machinery - either at federal or state level performs the tasks entrusted without corruption and abuse of power.

"The people need not fear because only those involved in such immoral activities should fear the MACC. We are acting on behalf of the people and will not hesitate to drag those who violate the people's trust to court.

"The Sabah people must unite to fight corruption and abuse of power as this can paralyse the national administration," he said.

Dzulkifli also expressed his appreciation for the media, whom he described as part of the agency to fight corruption and abuse of power in the country.

"Without the media, the impact of the MACC programmes will not be felt. Thanks to the media, the people get to know of our efforts."

The Friends of Anti-Corruption Revolutionary Movement (Gerah) membership has reached 100,000, proving that the agency's efforts to fight graft and abuse of power is supported by the people.

7. Guan Eng's graft trial postponed to March 15



GEORGE TOWN: The corruption trial involving Penang Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng (*pic*) and businesswoman Phang Li Koon has been postponed to March 15 next year.

The new date for case management was fixed by the High Court as it cannot proceed with the case until the Federal Court decides on an appeal against a Court of Appeal decision that Lim need not file his defence.

"The case cannot proceed without the Federal Court's decision on the prosecution's appeal," Datuk V. Sithambaram, who is representing Phang, told reporters outside the court on Tuesday.

The Court of Appeal ruled in August that Section 62 of the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) Act 2009, which requires accused persons to disclose their defence statements to the prosecution before commencement of a trial, is unconstitutional.

Article 5(1) states that no person shall be deprived of his life and personal liberty except in accordance with the law while Article 8(1) emphasises equal protection before the law.

The prosecution is appealing the decision.

Lim was charged on June 30, 2016, 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.

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

Phang is charged with abetting Lim.

8. Vietnamese Datuk detained by MACC over alleged maritime bribery

PETALING JAYA: A Vietnamese businesswoman with the title of Datuk has been detained by the anti-graft body for allegedly offering bribes to maritime officers.

Sources said the woman, 41, was held at the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) office in Kuantan at 12.10pm on Wednesday (Nov 15).

She was summoned there to assist a probe into the alleged offering of RM890,000 to settle a case earlier this year.

It is learnt that the amount was paid in five transactions to Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency (MMEA) officers.

"We believe the suspect can assist us in identifying the boat owners and crewmen who have been released so far.

"Checks also showed that some of the boats were using false registration when they were detained by the authorities.

"We also want to know the extent of the links between the suspect and the agents working for a government enforcement agency," said the source.

MACC deputy chief commissioner (operations) Datuk Seri Azam Baki confirmed the arrest.

Azam said the suspect would be brought to the MACC headquarters to assist in the case.

She is expected to be remanded at 9am in a magistrate's court in Putrajaya on Thursday (Nov 16).

Last week, the suspect was charged with allegedly offering a RM800,000 bribe to two MMEA officers as an inducement to release nine Vietnamese fishing boats seized under the Fisheries Act 1985.

The accused has been living in the country for the past 17 years and is believed to be a mother of four.

9. AC: Blacklist consultants and contractors in Hospital Sultanah Nora Ismail upgrade project



KUALA LUMPUR: The Works Ministry has been urged to blacklist consultants and contractors involved in the Hospital Sultanah Nora Ismail's upgrade project.

In a statement issued Thursday, the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) said this was due to their negligence and failure to complete the upgrading work on time which resulted in unaccounted losses.

The proposal to blacklist negotiators and contractors was among the recommendations made by the PAC, following a working visit by chairman Datuk Hasan Arifin to the hospital in Batu Pahat, Johor on Oct 2.

According to the PAC, the contractors and consultants appointed to government projects, particularly health facilities, must be chosen based on its financial and technical capabilities.

The PAC also said that the government must re-evaluate its methods in appointing and paying consultants in order to ensure check and balance.

The committee also wanted the Works Ministry to file a report on negligence by the contractor and the consultant to the professional board.

At the same time, the PAC, in its findings, said that the Public Works Department should have scrutinised the weaknesses in the design of the upgrade project.

"Although this project was carried out by direct negotiations, the department should have scrutinized the weaknesses in several design components of the project which were found to be

unsuitable and not up to the standards of the hospital."

Meanwhile, the PAC also called on the Health Ministry to ensure that it constantly monitors works conducted by concessionaire companies, following a report by the PAC on the Facility Engineering Maintenance Services (FEMS).

"The Health Ministry must conduct stringent monitoring on works conducted by concessionaires before verifying payment claims on every hospital across the country.

"Concessionaire companies must have integrity in filing payment claims to the Health Ministry," it said.

10. MoF can't say when 1MDB's financial reports can be completed



KUALA LUMPUR: The Ministry of Finance cannot determine when 1Malaysia Development Bhd's (1MDB) reports for its 2015 and 2016 financial years can be completed because of ongoing police investigations.

In a parliamentary written reply dated Nov 16, the Ministry said this was due to the confiscation of several key documents by the police on July 8, 2015.

"On July 8, 2015, the police seized various original documents from 1MDB's office.

"1MDB's management has contacted the police regarding the return of the company's documents, but till today, the original documents haven't been returned to the company.

Muhyiddin had asked why there was a delay in tabling 1MDB's financial report in Parliament.

"1MDB's auditors have begun the auditing process on the 2015 and 2016 financial year based on existing information," the ministry said.

"But the deadline to complete the audit cannot be ascertained because police investigations are still ongoing," it added.

The ministry also said it wasn't necessary for 1MDB's financial reports to be tabled in Parliament as they could be publicly accessed at the Companies Commission of Malaysia (SSM).

"The financial reports are audited documents that were filed with the SSM ... 1MDB's financial reports from 2009 to 2014 can be downloaded at SSM's website.

"It has never been necessary to table 1MDB's financial report in the Dewan Rakyat," the ministry said.

In January, 1MDB announced the appointment of Parker Randall as its auditor.

Parker Randall is an international auditing firm and was the fourth auditor to be appointed, the previous ones being Ernst & Young, KPMG, and Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu Ltd.

11. Manager arrested for allegedly misappropriating RM2.54mil in Govt funds



MELAKA: A manager of an agricultural organisation here has been arrested for alleged misappropriation of RM2.54mil under the Federal Government's fertiliser scheme for paddy farmers.

The 38-year-old was arrested by Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) officers at his office on Jalan Hang Tuah here at about 3pm on Monday (Nov 20).

The manager is believed to have submitted 23 false claims for the supply of 56,700 bags of fertiliser throughout 2016 without the approval of the organisation.

MACC's senior investigation director Datuk Simi Abdul Ghani confirmed the arrest.

He said the signature of a top official of a farmers' organisation was allegedly forged to make the claims.

12. No getting away with graft in Melaka



In custody: The project manager being led away after he was remanded.

MELAKA: Civil servants involved in corruption and power abuse, including misappropriating Government funds meant for the poor in the state, will be seriously dealt with, says Chief Minister Datuk Seri Idris Haron.

He added that civil servants should not think that they are untouchable and that any of their wrongdoings would be swept under the carpet.

"Melaka is the first state where the top Government officials were asked to take the anti-graft pledge with the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission in July 2015.

"This was an initiative by the state government to reach zero corruption cases among civil servants.

He was commenting on the MACC's investigation into the unauthorised claims of free fertilisers involving RM500,000.

Idris had said last month that the signature of a top official of the Merlimau National Farmers Association of Malaysia (Nafas) was allegedly forged to make the claims involving 38 transactions.

MACC begun its probe following the statement by Idris to *The Star* on Oct 12.

Yesterday, a 38-year-old project manager for an Area Farmers' Organisation (PPK) was remanded for six days to assist in the investigation into the misappropriation of RM2.54mil from the Federal Government's Scheme for Fertiliser to aid padi farmer in the state.

The manager attached to the Merlimau PPK in Jasin, was arrested at about 3pm on Monday at the state Farmers Organisation Board office in Jalan Hang Tuah here.

The manager is believed to have submitted 23 false claims for the supply of 56,700 bags of fertiliser throughout 2016 without the approval of the organisation.

The case was confirmed by *MACC* senior investigation director Datuk Simi Abdul Ghani.

13. MACC: Investigation over Sg Lembu illegal factory case in final stages

BUKIT MERTAJAM: Investigations into the illegal carbon factory in Sungai Lembu are in its final stages, according to the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC).

"We will submit the papers after the investigation papers are completed, and I do not want to state a specific time but it is in its final stages," he said during an aid presentation ceremony for flood victims at Taman Makok here Saturday.

The factory in Sungai Lembu gained attention when the MACC arrested state exco member Phee Boon Poh on Aug 11 over two letters he wrote to the local council urging it not to shut down the factory which was said to have illegally burned sawdust to produce carbon for filters.

14. Six productivity sectors launched with RM5mil grant each



Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak (centre) at the the National Oversight Productivity Council meeting on Monday. -Bernama

KUALA LUMPUR: A nexus of six productivity sectors were launched with grants of RM5mil each.

The six productivity sectors, namely agro food, machinery and equipment, tourism, private healthcare, Information and Communication Technology (ICT), and professional services, were launched by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak on Monday (Nov 27).

These are part of the nine sub sectors identified under the National Productivity Blueprint.

"The productivity nexus is a centre of excellence for all matters related in increasing productivity at the sectorial and manufacturing, and will be the catalyst in implementing productivity initiatives with close cooperation with the Government.

"There are at least 89 programmes by the Government which can be utilised by the industries with an allocation of RM9.5bil for 2017 to 2020," said Najib in his speech on Monday after the National Oversight Productivity Council meeting in Parliament.

He said the National Productivity Council has also agreed on an action plan for the electrical and electronic sub sector where four main strategies and 13 initiatives are to be implemented in the next three years.

The Malaysia Productivity Blueprint was launched this year with an aim of labour productivity growth of 3.7% annually in order to become an advanced nation by 2020.

15. A-G's Report: Unfinished sport projects signed off as completed work

KUALA LUMPUR: Two projects under the Youth and Sports Ministry were "declared completed" before the completion of construction works, the Auditor-General's Report 2016 Series 2 revealed.

It said that the RM253.89mil 'Projek Gelanggang Sukan' was scheduled to run from 2014 to 2017, with a declaration signed for a sports court in Kg Medan and one in Kg Lubok Buntar, Kedah.

According to the report, the Kg Medan project was valued at RM168,850 and was awarded to Sedia Saing Enterprise on Sept 15, 2015.

However, the completed work declaration was signed on Dec 15, 2015 even though the certificate of practical completion (CPC) was released on Sept 14, 2016.

The report said that the completed work declaration was signed on Dec 13, 2015 but the CPC was only issued on Sept 7, 2016.

"The declaration made stated that the work was completed and all the salaries for the workers of the project were fully paid although the contractor had not completed the construction work," it said, adding that any fake declaration is punishable under the Penal Code.

In response to this, the ministry said that it had sent a warning letter and reminders to the contractors on the fake declarations through the Kedah Youth and Sports Department.

The report also revealed that a contractor for the construction of a futsal court in Kg Tundun, Semporna was paid for undelivered supplies.

According to the report, the Sabah Youth and Sports Department also made a full payment of a claim that has previously been made.

"The claims include chairs and tables supplies worth RM15,750 that were not delivered. A repeat payment for building materials worth RM6,500 was also made to the contractor," it said.

The auditors also found that the department paid RM31,040 to three different contractors for undelivered work on Dec 21, 2015.

In a response to the auditors, the ministry said its Sabah department has released a letter dated on Dec 28, 2015 to complete the work as stated in the quotation.

"The Sabah Youth and Sports Ministry has admitted their mistake and told the contractor to finish their work," it said.

The Youth and Sports Ministry will be one of the first ministries to be summoned by Public Accounts Committee (PAC) over issues surrounding its expenditures on sports

16. PAC: Several ministries, agencies to explain shortcomings

KUALA LUMPUR: The Public Accounts Committee (PAC) will call up several government ministries and agencies to clarify issues raised in the Auditor-General's Report 2016 Series 2.

Its chairman Datuk Seri Hasan Arifin said the ministries include the Ministry of Youth and Sports on the construction of sport facilities for youth, as well as the Ministry of Rural and Regional Development.

"In addition, we will call agencies like the Bintulu Port Authority and Malaysia Venture Capital Management Berhad," he told a press conference at the Parliament House in conjunction with the tabling of the Auditor-General's Report 2016 Series 2 in the Dewan Rakyat.

Auditor-General Tan Sri Madinah Mohamad was also present at the press conference.

A total of 240 recommendations were submitted in the report to enable corrective and improvement actions to be taken at Federal and state levels.

Meanwhile, Madinah said the National Audit Department (NAD) had taken proactive measures by conducting meetings with the relevant agencies before presenting the report.

"The National Audit Department has conducted meetings with enforcement and Federal Government agencies to determine certain violations or negligence on the part of civil servants for immediate action," she said.

She said the method proved effective when NAD did the same before the presentation of last year's report.

"The National Audit Department is cooperating with all enforcement agencies including the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission," she added.

17. A-G's Report: No Ministry approval in Bintulu Port Authority RM1.4bil deal

KUALA LUMPUR: The Bintulu Port Authority (BPA) granted a RM1.4bil supply base dock project to a construction company via direct negotiation, according to the Auditor-General's Report 2016 Series 2.

The report added that the granting of the contract was done without obtaining prior approval from the Finance Ministry.

The project did not go through detailed planning before it was awarded to Muhibbah Viccana JV (MVJV) on Dec 16, 2016.

The report said four of the five procurements under the project were done through direct negotiations, when they were supposed to be done through an open tender.

"The Audit did not find any evidence indicating that the BPA had applied for permission from the Finance Ministry to execute procurement through direct negotiation," said the report.

It said that there were also no letters of intent for all four procurements, adding that there were no price negotiations between the two parties.

"BPA's failure to adhere to these price negotiation procedures expose them to the risks of abuse of power and mismanagement. Without market research and cost estimates, BPA was not able to ensure that this project was best value for money," it said.

BPA was among the government agencies expected to be summoned by the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) over issues surrounding its expenditures.

18. A-G's Report: Foreign workers with i-Kad still being arrested

PETALING JAYA: Foreign workers are still being arrested despite having their i-Kad with them, according to the Auditor-General's Report 2016 Series 2.

The report which was released on Monday (Nov 27) said that the usage of the i-Kad as an identification document for foreign workers failed because the document was not recognised as an official identification document by enforcement authorities.

The report said that 84 out of 134 employers found that due to the i-Kad not being recognised as an official document, the foreign workers were still being arrested by the authorities.

"This is because the police have difficulties verifying the authenticity of the i-Kad and would have to refer to the Immigration Department or Percetakan Nasional Malaysia Bhd (PNMB) to verify the document," it said.

19. AG Report released, PAC identifies ministries, agencies it is looking into

KUALA LUMPUR: The Public Accounts Committee (PAC) has identified the Youth and Sports Ministry as among the ministries and government agencies it will be looking into following the release of the second volume of the Auditor-General's Report 2016 in the Dewan Rakyat on Monday.

The others include the Bintulu Port Authority and Malaysian Venture Capital, PAC chairman Datuk Hasan Arifin told reporters at PAC office in Parliament here Monday.

The Youth and Sports Ministry will be asked to clarify issues related to its expenditure on sports venues, said Hasan.

"We are not looking for fault but we just want them to improve themselves in the future," he said.

Hasan, however did not provide details on these issues.

Although there were weaknesses that needed to be worked on by the ministries and agencies, he said he was satisfied with their overall performance.

"A total of 126 (agencies) were audited without reprimand, 12 were audited without reprimand but were given (advice), four were reprimanded, and one received an objection," he said.

Auditor-General Tan Sri Dr Madinah Mohamad said the audit department has moved for actions against certain government agencies without having to wait for the PAC.

She said the department is already cooperating with all enforcement agencies, including the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC), for immediate action.

20. AG's Report: Raw water in Melaka dams polluted by land encroachment activity

MELAKA: The raw water supply in Melaka dams, especially in the Durian Tunggal Dam in Alor Gajah and Jus Dam in Jasin, were found to have been polluted as a result of land encroachment activities, according to the Auditor-General's Report 2016 Series 2 released Monday.

The report said there were 721 violations of raw water quality reported at nine water treatment plants between 2014 and 2016, with chemical fertiliser, sand mining, catfish farming, rubber and oil palm plantation activities identified as the main contributors.

"If those activities were left uncontrolled and unstopped, the functions of raw water in the water catchment areas will be jeopardized, hence causing deterioration in the quality of the environment," the report said.

The audit also found that water regulatory management was unsatisfactory, inefficient and ineffective especially in terms of licensing, the quality and quantity of the raw water supply, and in the management of revenue and raw water abstraction.

As such, the report proposed that the State Water Regulatory Body carry out a detailed study on the quantity, quality and alternative sources of raw water to ensure optimum and sufficient supply, and also to carry out monitoring and enforcement activities in dam areas to prevent further pollution.

21. MACC: Leaked witness statement was shared with defendant's lawyers



MACC: Leaked witness statement was shared with defendant's lawyers

KUALA LUMPUR: The leaked witness statement on a graft trial involving a former Johor Exco member was shared with the defendant's lawyer upon request, said Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC).

According to MACC deputy chief commissioner Datuk Azam Baki (**pic**), the statement was handed over to the defendant's lawyer for the purposes of defence.

Azam said that the MACC viewed the leak very seriously, as contents of the classified document were being circulated on social media.

"Since the case that involves a former Johor Exco Member is still in trial, the MACC is concerned that the leak will obstruct court proceedings."

Azam said a police report will be lodged on that matter so that action can be taken against those responsible for the leak of the classified document.

"I want to stress that the leaked statement was prejudicial since the case is still in court trial," he added.

On Monday, DAP Senai assemblywoman Wong Shu Qi was referred to the Johor State assembly special committee for her allegations against Mentri Besar Datuk Seri Mohamed Khaled Nordin.

Wong was referring to a report on a website, which claimed that Khaled had received RM12mil, of which RM11.2mil was in cash, from developers to change bumiputera lots to non-bumiputera lots.

22. Penang Tithes Centre chief claims trial to two counts of graft



BUTTERWORTH: The chief executive officer (CEO) of the Penang Tithes Management Centre (PUZ) claimed trial at the Sessions Court here on Wednesday to two counts of bribery charges.

Datuk Azman Abdul Samat, 50, was charged with receiving a bribe in the form of a cheque worth RM5,000 without any returns from Mohd Wardi Ramli, the owner of Syarikat MW Global Trading, with knowledge of its connection with his official duty.

He was accused of committing the offence at No 4, Jalan Perda Selatan, Bandar Perda, Bukit Mertajam in January 2014.

He was also charged with receiving a cheque for RM4,000 without any returns from Ashri Ismail, the owner of Syarikat Al Global Trading, with the knowledge of its connection with his official duty.

He claimed trial to the charges under Section 165 of the Penal Code which carries a jail term of up to two years, a fine or both if found guilty.

DPP Ahmad Ghazali Muhamad Nadzri proposed bail at RM10,000 for both charges.

Sessions Judge Sitarun Nisa Abdul Aziz set bail at RM5,000 with one surety and fixed Dec 29 for case management and submission of documents.

The accused were represented by Reza Rahim and Rajivan Nambiar.

Azman Abdul had previously claimed trial to another graft charge on July 21 and three other charges on July 19.

23. Three Bio Desaru projects inactive for seven years

JOHOR BARU: Three development projects on a 2,100 acre site in Bio Desaru, with contracts signed between 2007 and 2014, were found to be inactive, according to the Auditor- General's Report 2016 Series 2.

Bio Desaru, an organic food valley on over 8,912.5 acres in the subdistricts of Sedili Kechil and Pantai Timur, near Kota Tinggi here, was developed by Bio Desaru Sdn Bhd.

The report said six out of nine development projects, under business cooperation, signed between 2008 and 2014 showed progress of less than 60% of the total area agreed upon.

"Performance of lease development has reached 74.3% out of the 1,457 acres signed with investors, while the performance of joint-venture development was only 69.7% from the total 1,818 acres signed with investors," said the report.

Bio Desaru's management of development activities is deemed satisfactory as 4,694 acres of 7,927.5 acres are in operation and have active investors.

The report proposed for the company to provide a plan of action for joint-venture projects that were delayed in their development.

The company was also told to improve the level of evaluation on investor proposal papers to ensure the projects could be implemented.

Bio Desaru is a subsidiary of JBiotech Holdings Sdn Bhd, which is wholly owned by Johor Biotechnology and Biodiversity Corporation.

24.National Audit Dept: Perak did well with its finances

IPOH: The Perak government has received a thumbs-up from the National Audit Department on its financial standing and performance last year.

In the 2016 Auditor-General's Report, the state was deemed to have managed its finances well, despite seeing a lower consolidated fund.

Auditor-General Tan Sri Dr Madinah Mohamad said in the state's financial statement for the year ending Dec 31, its consolidated fund dipped by RM1mil from RM952mil in 2015.

"The total revenue collected, however, increased by RM54.6mil to RM1.01bil from RM957mil in 2015.

"The state collected RM928mil in 2014, RM881mil in 2013 and RM868mil in 2012," she added.

Madinah said the state's investments in shares also increased by about RM1.2mil or 1.5% last year.

"Its total public debt has dropped by RM268mil to RM338mil. In 2015, it was RM606mil. There were no outstanding debts owed by the state," she said.

Madinah said the state's performance in development projects under the 11th Malaysia Plan was also good.

She said some RM370mil of the RM397mil allocated for the projects had been spent.

"Of the 1,029 planned projects, 745 have been completed, with 83 still ongoing and 201 yet to start," she said.

Madinah said the state needed to maintain its achievements in financial management.

"It needs to be thrifty with expenses, while not affecting its services and economic development."

25.No approval for BPA project

KUALA LUMPUR: The National Audit Department has discovered several weaknesses in procurement management by Bintulu Port Authority (BPA), including the approval of a RM1.247bil project without a comprehensive study.

Also detected in the Auditor-General's Report 2016 Series 2, which was tabled at the Dewan Rakyat yesterday, were the approval of three procurements for jobs worth RM1.452bil without prior financial allocations, four procurements valued at RM1.467bil without open tender, and conducting direct negotiations without the consent of the Finance Ministry.

"The department found several weaknesses in the direct negotiation process, tender process, consultant and contractor appointment and contract clauses.

"Consultancy fees were also not supported by complete documents and the board of directors' instructions to postpone the supply base project were not complied with," said the report.

An audit by the department on procurement for construction of a wharf at the supply base project in the Second Basin of Bintulu Port, worth RM1.247bil, found that there were two sets of minutes of separate meetings provided by the BPA general manager and the meeting's secretariat for the January 2016 board of directors meeting.

"During the No.1/2016 board of directors meeting on March 29, the board of directors agreed that the minutes provided by the secretariat are more accurate and the meeting agreed to approve the minutes.

"The audit on the minutes of the meeting provided by the general manager found the meeting's decision on the MVJV appointment was contrary to the decision recorded by the meeting's secretariat, namely by the planning and commercial manager," said the report.

It said MVJV's appointment letter, sent to the minister, was only signed by three directors - the board's chairman, deputy chairman and general manager - while eight board members were present at board meeting No.7/2016.

To overcome the weaknesses, the report suggested that the Transport Ministry instruct the BPA board to conduct a detailed investigation and report to enforcement agencies if criminal elements were found.

The ministry should also order BPA to review the compliance and monitoring mechanism to avoid any misconduct in its internal procurement management, it added

26. Khaled to address graft accusation at Johor assembly sitting



ISKANDAR PUTERI: Datuk Seri Khaled Nordin (*pic*) has promised to address the graft accusation in connection with the Johor land scandal that broke out in March.

The Johor Mentri Besar said the issue in which he was accused of receiving payments for transferring bumiputra lots to non-bumiputra status would be addressed during his rounding up speech at the state assembly sitting next Monday (Dec 4).

"Since the issue was brought up during the sitting, I will answer there.

"I am not going to run. I'm here," he told reporters when asked about the issue during a break at the sitting here on Thursday (Nov 30).

On Monday (Nov 27), Senai assemblyman Wong Shu Qi questioned the authenticity of several documents and information uploaded online, implicating Khaled in the scandal.

Wong, referring to a report on unnamed website, had claimed that the mentri besar received RM12mil, of which RM11.2mil was in cash, from developers to change bumiputra lots to non-bumiputra lots.