

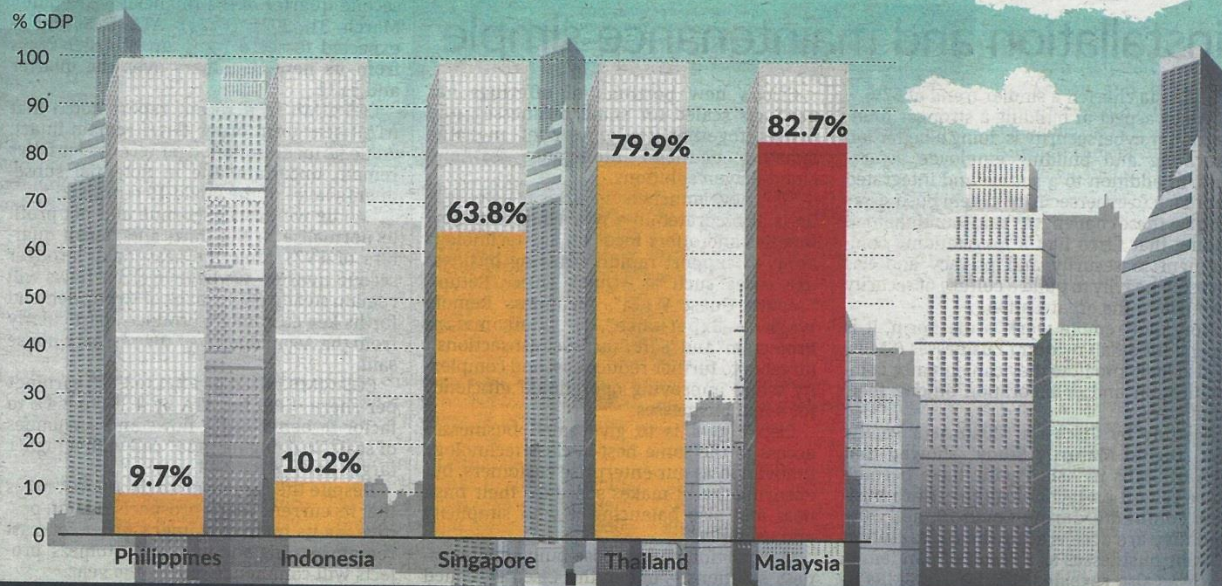
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StarBiz

Malaysia's household debt as a percentage of GDP versus its Asean peers (2019)



Source: CEIC/AmBank Research

TheStargraphics

Household debt under pressure but economic stimulus and low interest rates to cushion it. > See page 3

AAX calms MAHB

Airline to tweak debt revamp scheme to pacify creditor

AVIATION

By ROYCE TAN
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TheStar Exclusive

PETALING JAYA: AirAsia X Bhd (AAX) is expected to make some tweaks to its RM63.5bil debt restructuring plan, but this will only be to satisfy one creditor.

Sources said the scheme would be amended to accommodate Malaysia Airports Holdings Bhd (MAHB). "Seven to eight creditors have filed to intervene. They have the right to do so but they are all technical interventions. No one has objected to the proposed debt restructuring, only MAHB," said the source, adding that the amendments to the originating summons would be filed soon.

It was reported in a business weekly that the amendments were to make it "more palatable" to the airline's 1,200 unsecured creditors but those familiar with the ongoing developments said that was not the case as it would only be done in the interest of the airport operator. On Oct 7, AAX filed an originating summons at the High Court for leave to con-

vene a meeting with its unsecured creditors, of which Malaysia Airports (Sempang) Sdn Bhd (MASSB), a wholly-owned subsidiary of MAHB, is a part of.

On Oct 22, MASSB filed a lawsuit against AAX to recover RM78.16mil for various aeronautical charges, which was 0.001% of the airline's entire debt. The following day, it filed an application to intervene and be excluded from the restructuring scheme, saying that it is a secured creditor of AAX. MAHB later said that its lawsuit would not derail AAX's scheme.

"Looks like AAX will give MAHB what it wants, which is not to be an unsecured creditor. There will be two classes of creditors. MAHB will be in the first class, away from other unsecured creditors," the source said, adding that none of the other creditors would complain.

Among others that have applied to intervene in the restructuring scheme were BOC Aviation Ltd, Macquarie Aircraft Leasing

Services (Ireland) Ltd, Sky High I Leading Co Ltd and Kayan Group.

Another source said none of them have given any reasons nor disclosed what they were intervening for. "They could just be keeping their options open while they are still in discussions with AAX. They are unlikely to be hostile nor disruptive to the scheme. Only MAHB was explicit with what it wanted and that is why AAX gave in," the source said.

It is a prerequisite that the proposed debt restructuring scheme be completed and be successful before it can formalise any fund-raising exercise. AAX announced the debt restructuring plan on Oct 6, which proposed that its creditors take a 99% haircut from RM63.5bil to RM200mil to avoid liquidation. Current liabilities amount to RM2bil while the remaining are contingent liabilities.

The plan required approval from creditors holding 75% of the total debt. It is learnt that Airbus itself held roughly 75%. "Time is of the essence here and AAX is running out of money. It needs to get its creditors to vote on the scheme, get it done and dusted with and move on so that it can raise new money and revive the company," said the source.

A-G: Only part of loans used for projects

THE Auditor-General has expressed concern that only a small fraction of new loans was used for development projects.

Auditor-General Datuk Nik Azman Nik Abdul Majid said that of the RM138.559bil in new loans, 59.9% or RM82.723bil was used to repay matured debts.

"This means that only 29.7% or RM41.151bil is allocated for development expenditure.

"What we recommend is that the amount should ideally be used for development projects to stimulate the economy in a wholesome manner.

"This would be more effective so that we can get revenue through taxes," Nik Azman told a press conference at the media room in Parliament.

Also present were several Public Accounts Committee (PAC) members, including its chairman Wong Kah Woh, his deputy Datuk Seri Azizah Dun, Datuk Seri Ahmad

“
We need to be prepared and ensure that there are value-for-money economical activities and projects that can help us repay high commitments.”

Datuk Nik Azman
Nik Abdul Majid

Maslan and Nurul Izzah Anwar.

Nik Azman said that currently, Malaysia needed to pay about RM2bil a year.

Based on forecast, he said the country might end up repaying about RM10bil annually just for

debts in 2034.

"This is an obvious hike, so we need to be prepared and ensure that there are value-for-money economical activities and projects that can help us to repay high commitments," Nik Azman added.

Earlier, Wong said the Federal Government's debt in 2019 had increased to RM792.997bil compared to RM741.048 in 2018.

He said debt to gross domestic product (GDP) stood at 52.5% compared with 51.2% in 2018.

The total Federal Government debt and liabilities, on the other hand, stood at RM1.080 trillion.

"The PAC was briefed by the Auditor-General and some issues were noted.

"Among them was the Auditor-General's opinion that if the government wants to channel funds to government-linked companies for loans, then it should be recorded as 'advanced or loan that can be claimed'," said Wong.

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STAMPED OUT

After flying high from months of soaring demand due to the MCO, it all came crashing down for a syndicate that sells illegal passage to foreign workers and migrants. In a nationwide blitz, graft busters cut off its tentacles, including Immigration personnel from Putrajaya to Kota Kinabalu. > See report by MAZWIN NIK ANIS on Page 8



Facing the law: Immigration officers and others allegedly involved in forging documents for immigrants being brought to the Magistrate's Court in Putrajaya and Johor Baru to be remanded. — MOHD SAHAR MISNI/The Star / Bernama

By MAZWIN NIK ANIS
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Syndicate busted in blitz

Immigration officers among 46 arrested for selling illegal passage

PUTRAJAYA: Border closures during the movement control order period were a boon for a syndicate that sold illegal passage in and out of the country for foreign workers and illegal immigrants, but it all came crashing down in a massive nationwide blitz.

Codenamed "Ops Selat", 46 individuals – 27 Immigration officers, 14 foreign workers agents and five civilians who acted as middlemen in the syndicate's activities – were arrested in Putrajaya, Johor Baru, Kota Kinabalu and Kuching yesterday.

The syndicate, which has infiltrated the Immigration Department, took advantage of the lockdown imposed due to the pandemic to provide illegal services to foreign workers and illegal immigrants.

Believed to have been operating for about a year, the syndicate's services were even more in demand since the start of the MCO in March.

"The syndicate became more active since the MCO was in place, providing services to foreign work-

ers and undocumented foreigners who were stranded in Malaysia because of the lockdown," a source told *The Star*.

The source explained the syndicate was believed to have provided two types of services, including the "flying passport" services where agents will collect passports belonging to foreign workers and illegal immigrants whose social visit passes have expired.

The passports will then be given the Immigration's exit and entry stamps by the syndicate to allow the permits to be extended, which is a violation of procedure as the owner of a travel document must be present during the Immigration process, said the source.

The second modus operandi, said sources, is "counter facilities" at the KL International Airport and KLIA2

for illegal immigrants who have been blacklisted and whose visas have expired, and for a fee of between RM500 and RM6,000, they are free to return to their country and enter Malaysia.

However, graft busters got wind of it and after months of surveillance, the authorities made a round of arrests, putting an end to the syndicate's activities, said the sources.

Yesterday, the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) brought 44 suspects to court to obtain remand orders to pursue investigations into the syndicate's activities.

In Putrajaya, 23 individuals, including 14 Immigration officers, were remanded while in Johor Baru, 13 suspects – eight of them Immigration personnel – had been

remanded for seven days.

Three Immigration officers and one civilian were remanded for five days in Shah Alam while in Kota Kinabalu, three civilians were also remanded for five days, and in Kuching, an individual had been remanded for seven days.

On the arrest of his men, Immigration director-general Datuk Khairul Dzamee Daud said the department would not compromise with staff who abused their power.

"Those involved must be prepared to face legal action and face imprisonment or be sacked if they are found guilty," he said.

Khairul assured the arrests did not affect Immigration's daily operations and its service to the people.

"This is a serious breach of the country's entry points," the source pointed out.

MACC investigation director Datuk Norazlan Mohd Razali confirmed the arrests and did not rule out the possibility of more arrests.

"We are still investigating the case, so there is a possibility that others will be called in to help in the probe."

"The MACC would like to express our appreciation to the Immigration director-general for the cooperation and providing us with information as we work towards crippling the syndicate," he added.

Sources said the operation was the result of intelligence and surveillance work done over six months on members of the syndicate operating at the country's main entry points including KLIA, KLIA2 and the Customs, Immigration and Quarantine complex at Bangunan Sultan Iskandar in Johor Baru.

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IGP assures Jho Low of 'safe passage'

Don't be afraid to come back and defend yourself, top cop tells fugitive

KUALA LUMPUR: Fugitive businessman Low Taek Jho, better known as Jho Low, need not be afraid to return to Malaysia if he feels he is innocent in connection with the 1MDB Development Bhd (1MDB) scandal, says the Inspector-General of Police.

Tan Sri Abdul Hamid Bador said if Low was confident of his innocence, "I am inviting him back so that he can defend himself".

He was commenting on claims by Low that he had borrowed 1MDB funds and was ready to return in exchange for not being prosecuted.

"I can even arrange for his (Low) meeting with the Attorney General (AG). I can assure him safe passage," Abdul Hamid said.

On whether Low would be prosecuted or otherwise, the country's top cop said the decision was not under his purview.

"He has to discuss with the AG if he really feels that he is innocent."

"Low is not only wanted by authorities in Malaysia but by authorities in the United States and Singapore as well," Abdul Hamid said.

Al Jazeera reported that Low reached out to the previous Pakatan Harapan-led government to avoid



Assuring words: Abdul Hamid (left) said that he can arrange for Low to meet with the AG if he really feels he is innocent.

charges over the 1MDB scandal.

The news network said he allegedly spoke to government representatives in a series of phone calls from May to November 2018.

Audio clips of his phone conversations were featured in Al Jazeera's two-part special investigation titled *Jho Low: Hunt For A Fugitive*.

Al Jazeera said it had privately verified the conversations, which were given to it exclusively.

However, it did not identify whom Low was speaking to from

the Malaysian side.

"I want you to convey, if possible to Mahathir (former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad), that I really believe the change in government does present a real opportunity to resolve these 1MDB-related issues. I am committed to achieving that," said Low in one of the clips.

He said that in return, he would give up all assets and that the monies would be used to repay 1MDB bonds.

Apart from Malaysia, Low is also wanted by the US Justice Department for criminal offences despite reaching a US\$700mil civil suit settlement with them last year.

In the audio clips, Low is heard saying that he wanted the Malaysian government to help him deal with the United States, Singapore and Switzerland over charges he faces in those countries.

He also pinned the blame on former prime minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak, claiming that ultimately, he had no authority to make any decision over the sovereign wealth fund.

"It is a pretty known fact that all the approvals have to be approved by the Finance Minister," he said in reference to Najib.

Najib was sentenced to 12 years' jail and fined RM210mil in July for a case involving SRC International, a 1MDB subsidiary.

Najib, who is currently out on bail while awaiting the outcome of his appeal, is also facing multiple other charges concerning 1MDB.

Low also claimed in the recording that Najib received a donation from the late King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia, but it was only a small portion that ended up in Najib's

personal bank account.

He also said he believed that Najib's wife, Datin Seri Rosmah Mansor, purchased jewellery worth more than US\$500mil using 1MDB funds.

Low, who is from Penang, also claimed that Najib's son, Ashman, barraged him with text messages, including one which told him not to trust anyone from "the other side" and that a deal would be proposed but it was a "trick".

Low also absolved himself from any wrongdoing over the scandal.

"I don't believe there's any wrongdoing. All these ultimately, were loans - directly or indirectly."

"But ultimately, I think the time has come - we want to assist in repatriating these assets back in return for cooperating and moving on with life without, you know, being prosecuted," he said.

He also claimed that it was a very difficult and stressful situation for him.

The Al Jazeera report also said that Low was still able to travel despite Interpol's red notices on him, supposedly flying from Bangkok to Dubai in a jet in November 2019, stopping for three days in Ahmedabad, India, along the way.

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Lap of luxury

Graft busters investigating a syndicate offering 'special services' to foreign workers have seized more than RM800,000 in cash, high-powered motorcycles, houses, plots of land, jewellery, designer handbags and luxury cars – including a Rolls Royce used by a low-ranking Immigration officer earning at most RM4,000 a month. Fifty people have been arrested, and this is just the start. > 2

Low-ranking officer owns Rolls Royce

Immigration man among those arrested in nationwide blitz on illegal travel ring

By MAZWIN NIK ANIS
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PUTRAJAYA: Graft busters could not believe their eyes in their investigation into an immigration syndicate offering "special services" – a fleet of luxury cars comprising a Phantom Rolls Royce, Mustang, Range Rover and an Audi.

Not had for an Immigration officer in the KP19 grade, where the salary range is only RM1,360 to RM4,052, not including allowances.

The four cars were seized, adding to an overall haul that included more than RM800,000 in cash, 22 other luxury cars, four high-powered motorcycles, as well as other assets such as houses, plots of land, jewellery and designer handbags.

Living within your means is sound advice for anyone, but per-

haps more so if you're going to run foul of the law.

The seizures came as part of a nationwide blitz codenamed "Ops Selat", which has also seen the arrest of 50 people involved in the syndicate: 28 Immigration Department officers, 17 foreign worker agents and five others.

The latest arrest yesterday involved an Immigration officer and three foreign worker agents who have been remanded for six days.

The syndicate providing "stamping facilities" to foreign workers and illegal immigrants is believed to be involved in international human trafficking, particularly in China, Vietnam, Indonesia and Bangladesh.

This was discovered during investigations into the syndicate which found that foreign agents had been working with Immigration

officers at Kuala Lumpur International Airport and KLIA2 to help foreigners enter and leave Malaysia.

Sources close to the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission said investigators were shocked to discover that a low-ranking Immigration officer possessed a fleet of luxury cars.

It was found that the setting up of the entire process and also special Immigration counters at KLIA and KLIA2 involved international syndicates and local agents.

"Visitors who have been blacklisted but want to enter Malaysia will be assisted by agents overseas who will provide their Malaysian counterparts with the visitors' details."

"The local agents will then contact Immigration officers at KLIA and KLIA2 to 'set up' counters to facilitate the foreigners' entry," a source told *The Star*.

A similar process was carried out when a foreigner – who has either been blacklisted, has a visit pass that has expired or possesses a fake passport – wanted to leave the country.

"We found out that the luxury cars were registered under two Chinese nationals believed to be foreign workers' agents operating here, as well as under the names of two local agents," said the source.

The syndicate, whose services were in high demand since the movement control order was imposed in March, is believed to have provided the "flying passport" services where agents would collect passports belonging to foreign workers and illegal immigrants whose social visit passes had expired.

The passports would then be given Immigration exit and entry

stamps by the syndicate to allow the permits to be extended, which is a violation of procedure as the owner of a travel document must be present during the Immigration process.

It is believed that the syndicate charges between RM500 and RM6,000 for "counter" facilities.

The syndicate, which has been in operation since 2017, is believed to have raked in RM14.5mil.

Intelligence revealed that the syndicate had provided their "flying passport" and "counter services" to at least 30,000 foreign workers and illegal immigrants.

MACC investigations director Datuk Norazlan Mohd Razali confirmed the arrests, saying that the suspects were being investigated under the MACC Act and the Anti-Money Laundering, Anti-Terrorism Financing and Proceeds of Unlawful Activities Act.

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Seven states record crime index lower than national level

KUALA LUMPUR: Seven states have recorded a crime index ratio below the national level.

The states are Sarawak (214.6), Perlis (207.5), Perak (195.8), Pahang (195.7), Kelantan (188.2), Terengganu (150.3) and Sabah (143.5).

The ratio per 100,000 population for the whole country last year improved to 256.6 compared to 273.5 in 2018, said chief statistician Datuk Seri Mohd Uzir Mahidin of the Statistics Department.

"The crime index ratio for all states declined except for Penang (3.7%), Sarawak (4.2%) and Terengganu (1.3%)," he said.

He said in a statement that cases of rape and causing injury increased by 5.5% and 2.9% respectively in 2019 compared to the previous year.

"On the other hand, the percentage of robbery and murder decreased 5.3% and 4% during the same period," Uzir said, noting that the percentage of house break-ins and theft increased 4.8% in 2019.

"Three types of criminal cases showed a decline last year, namely vehicle theft (14.1%), snatch theft (86.2%) and other theft (1.7%)," he added.

Uzir said the number of children under 18 years old involved in crime decreased by 8.7% from 5,294 cases in 2018 to 4,833 cases in 2019.

"The number of boys involved in crime also decreased by 9.2% while girls remained the same as in the previous year with 290," he added.

He also said that the number of drug addicts arrested last year showed a decline compared to the previous year, especially in Kelantan, Pahang, Negri Sembilan, Kuala Lumpur and Perlis.

"The highest number of drug addicts arrested was in Kedah (3,582 people) followed by Kelantan (2,998) and Penang (2,893) in 2019," he said.

On efforts to curb corruption, Uzir said the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission made 23.2% more arrests last year compared to 2018.

This was attributed to offences of giving bribery (79.0%) and false claims (35.8%).

"On the contrary, arrests for misuse of position and other offences declined at the rate of 24.7% and 9.8%, respectively," he added.

Uzir said the number of convicted prisoners' admission increased by 17.9% in 2019 (138,044) compared to 2018 (117,090).

"Selangor recorded the highest number of convicted prisoners' admission at 40,882 people followed by Sabah (15,695), Johor (14,297) and Penang (10,050)," he added.

The department also implemented the Population and Housing Census Malaysia 2020 through two phases, with the first from July 7 to Dec 21 via online (e-Census), and the second one will begin from Jan 20 to Feb 6 next year via face-to-face interviews.

"Further information on Census 2020 can be obtained through the census portal www.mycensus.gov.my or social media @MyCensus2020," he said.

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Patriot: Weed out traitors in Immigration and NRD

PETALING JAYA: The Immigration Department and the National Registration Department (NRD) ought to be revamped to weed out traitors, says National Patriots Association (Patriot) president Brig-Jen (Rtd) Datuk Mohamed Arshad Raji.

Citing allegations of civil servants' involvement in human trafficking and sale of MyKad, Arshad said: "Any illegal activity carried out by officials of the two agencies is tantamount to treason.

"And department heads must be told that they are to accept full responsibility and accountability in the future for any failure within their departments," he said in a statement.

There have been reports of arrests involving immigration officers as the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission carried out investigations into corrupt practices linked to human-trafficking activities.

In September last year, 20 NRD officers were arrested in Penang for allegedly selling identification documents to foreigners.

In another instance, four people, including an immigration officer linked to a trafficking ring involving China, Vietnam, Indonesia and Bangladesh foreign workers, were arrested on Nov 20.

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Immigration deputy director among three held

By FARIK ZOLKEPLI
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PUTRAJAYA: Three more Immigration officers, including a deputy director stationed at the KL International Airport (KLIA), have been detained in connection with a nationwide blitz codenamed *Ops Selat*.

Aged between 38 and 54, they were detained on Friday at the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) headquarters, sources said.

The three officers were brought to the Magistrate's Court here yes-

terday for remand proceedings.

The latest arrest brings the number of those detained since Nov 16 under *Ops Selat* to 53 people.

They include 33 Immigration officers stationed at the KLIA, KLIA2 and Bangunan Sultan Ismail Johor Baru.

"The MACC had also applied to extend the remand on 10 other suspects," said a source.

Two others were released on MACC bail.

The duo had allowed their accounts to be used for graft transactions, sources added.

Graft investigations into a syndi-

cate that offered services to foreign workers led to the discovery of luxury cars comprising a Rolls Royce Phantom, Mustang, Range Rover and an Audi.

These cars are said to be used by a low-ranking Immigration officer who earned about RM1,360 to RM4,052, not including allowances, in his day job.

The four cars were seized, adding to an overall haul that included more than RM800,000 in cash, 22 other luxury cars, four high-powered motorcycles, as well as assets and valuables such as houses, land, jewellery and designer handbags.

The syndicate is suspected to have provided "stamping facilities" to foreign workers and illegal immigrants, and is believed to be involved in international human trafficking, particularly in China, Vietnam, Indonesia and Bangladesh.

This was discovered during investigations which found that foreign agents had been working with Immigration officers at KLIA and KLIA2 to facilitate the entry and exit of foreigners.

Watch the video
TheStarTV.com



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An officer who is no gentleman

*If it had come as a surprise that a low-ranking public servant owns a fleet of luxury cars, investigations following his arrest have revealed more shocking details. Graftbusters are baffled as to how a man with a criminal record, including being a secret society member, can become an Immigration officer.
> See report by MAZWIN NIK ANIS on page 8*

‘Rolls Royce’ Immigration officer has criminal past

MACC: Suspect also believed
to be part of secret society

By MAZWIN NIK ANIS
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PUTRAJAYA: Graftbusters probing the Immigration “stamping facility” syndicate made another shocking discovery about a low-ranking Immigration officer found to own luxury cars – he has a criminal record and is believed to be a secret society member.

According to police records, this officer had a rap sheet for committing auto theft and robbery, said sources with knowledge of the investigation.

“He is believed to be part of a syndicate that committed these crimes and is led by a foreign workers’ agent, who was also arrested.

“Investigators also believe the officer is involved in a secret society,” said a source close to the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC).

“The question here is, how can someone with a criminal record be employed in the civil service?”

Investigators believe that after being employed as a civil servant he continued his criminal activities, including smuggling migrants.

However, it is not clear how long he has been employed in the Immigration Department.

The Immigration officer, who is employed under grade KP19, earning between RM1,360 and RM4,052 monthly minus allowance, had earlier shocked MACC investigators who found that he owned a fleet of luxury cars.

Sources also revealed that one

of the 12 foreign workers’ agents nabbed in the Ops Selat sting operation last week is a man wanted by the police.

It is believed that the suspect was involved in three cases involving car theft and conspiracy in syndicated crime.

“He is the agent who kept the four luxury cars owned by the Immigration officer,” a source told *The Star*.

To date, 56 individuals – 34 immigration officers, 12 foreign workers’ agents and 10 civilians – have been arrested.

“Investigations showed that the 10 civilians’ bank accounts were used to keep proceeds from the syndicate’s corrupt activities,” said MACC investigations director Datuk Norazlan Mohd Razali.

“Together with the Immigration Department and police, MACC will ensure that those involved, including the foreign workers’ agents, pay for their crime.”

The syndicate, whose services were in high demand since the movement control order began in March, is believed to have provided “flying passport” services with agents collecting passports belonging to foreign workers and illegal immigrants whose social visit passes had expired.

The passports would then be given the Immigration exit and entry stamps by the syndicate to allow permits to be extended, which is a violation of procedures as the owner of a travel document must be present during the Immigration process.

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Two military officers deny CBT charges amounting to nearly RM1mil

By NURBAITI HAMDAN
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KUALA LUMPUR: Two senior officers from the military academy have claimed trial at the Sessions Court here to charges of criminal breach of trust (CBT) and misappropriation of property amounting to almost RM1mil four years ago.

Academy director Lt Col Azman Mohamed Yasin, 57, and former academy commander Brig Gen (R) Mohd Adkaa Solahuddin, 63, from the Akademi Latihan Ketenteraan Universiti Pertahanan Nasional Malaysia (UPNM), were charged separately at the same court.

They pleaded not guilty after the charges were read out before Sessions Court judge Mahyon Talib here yesterday.

In the first and second charge, they allegedly committed CBT by each approving two payments of RM500,000 and RM420,000 belonging to the academy's welfare fund for investment through an unregistered financial institution.

The offences were allegedly committed at the academy at UPNM in Kem Perdana Sungai Besi between Aug 3 and Sept 23, 2016.

The charge under Section 409 of the Penal Code carries jail time of up to 20 years with whipping, and a fine upon conviction.

They also faced an alternative charge each of allegedly misappropriating the same amount of monies at the same place and time.

The charge under Section 403 of the Penal Code carries a sentence of up to five years' jail, whipping and a fine upon conviction.

Deputy Public Prosecutor Nur Shafini Mustafha offered bail at RM100,000 in one surety for all charges faced by each accused.

She urged the court to impose additional conditions, namely for the accused to surrender their passports to the court and report to the nearest Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) office monthly.

Lawyer Mohd Amir Aizat Abdul Rani, who represented Azman, said his client was still serving in the

military and had no other source of income.

"He has four children, three of whom are still schooling. His wife is a schoolteacher," Amir said.

He asked the court not to impose an excessive amount of bail on the grounds that its purpose was only to secure attendance in court.

"I ask for bail between RM15,000 and RM20,000. His passport is still with the MACC," he said.

Lawyer Nur Asyikin Zakaria, who represented Adkaa, asked for the bail to be paid in stages before or on Dec 7, adding that his livelihood was dependent on his pension.

"My client has a heart condition and is seeking treatment at the National Heart Institute," she said.

The court allowed bail at RM80,000 in one surety for each accused and imposed the additional conditions sought by the prosecution.

It also allowed Adkaa's application to pay the balance of his bail before or on Dec 7.

The cases were fixed for mention on Dec 22.



Facing the law: Azman arriving at the Sessions Court in Kuala Lumpur.
— Bernama

The Star | 25 November 2020 | Page: 3

Ex-CEO denies CBT and false claim charges

Former head of glove company and wife plead not guilty in case

SHAH ALAM: A former chief executive officer of a glove manufacturing company was charged in the Sessions Court here with 11 counts of criminal breach of trust (CBT) and making false claims involving a total of RM145.4mil between 2013 and 2018.

Datuk Lee Son Hong, 63, pleaded not guilty to all the charges read out by the court interpreter before Judge Rozilah Salleh yesterday.

On the three counts of making fraudulent claims, Lee is alleged to have issued a payment invoice in the name of Tower Success Group Ltd worth RM8.4mil for the supply of glove-making machines which, in actual fact, was never made.

He is accused of committing the offence at the glove manufacturer's office at the Bandar Baru Salak Tinggi Industrial Area in Sepang between March 27 and Dec 22, 2015.

For the three counts, he was charged under Section 18 of the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) Act 2009. It carries a jail sentence of up to 20 years and a fine of not less than five times the value of bribe or RM10,000, or whichever is higher, upon conviction.

As for the other eight charges, Lee was charged under Section 409 of the Penal Code with committing CBT amounting to RM137mil at the same location between Dec 12, 2013 and Jan 18, 2018 which carries a jail term not exceeding 20 years, whipping and a fine.



Facing the law: Lee (centre) arriving at the Sessions Court in Shah Alam. — Bernama

Also pleading not guilty at the same court with seven counts of abetting Lee on CBT charges amounting to RM108mil was his wife Datin Too Sooi Keng, 63.

She is accused of committing the offences at the company's office at the Bandar Baru Salak Tinggi Industrial Area in Sepang between Dec 12, 2013 and Jan 18, 2018.

Too was charged under Section 109 of the Penal Code which carries a jail term not exceeding 20 years, whipping and a fine.

The court fixed RM1.5mil as bail for each of the accused and also ordered them to surrender their passports. — Bernama

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KVDT2 awarded against govt procedures, says Wee

TRANSPORT Minister Datuk Seri Dr Wee Ka Siong took a swipe at the former Pakatan Harapan administration for what he said was awarding the Klang Valley Double Tracking Phase 2 (KVDT2) to a company against government procurement procedures.

He said the ministry listed the "pros and cons" on the decision made by the Pakatan government to award the project to the company, and also the termination of the letter of consent in the Cabinet memorandum by the present government.

"When verifying the Cabinet minutes on the termination of the letter of consent on Sept 2, the ministry also took into account the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commis-

sion's views confirming that the procurement of the KVDT2 project did not follow government procurement procedures," Dr Wee said in his ministerial winding-up speech on Budget 2021.

He reminded his predecessor, Anthony Loke (PH-Seremban), that it was during his tenure as Transport Minister that he informed the Cabinet on Sept 19, 2018, that the KVDT2 project could cost less if it was done through open tender.

He said Loke then submitted a Cabinet Memorandum on July 5, 2019, to award the KVDT2 project through direct negotiation to Syarikat Dhaya Maju LTAT Sdn Bhd (DM-LTAT).

He said Loke was also aware that Keretapi Tanah Melayu Bhd (KTMB)

had written to his ministry and the Finance Ministry in July 2019, expressing concerns that the project was awarded to DM-LTAT through direct negotiation.

Dr Wee also clarified that the decision to terminate the contract with DM-LTAT in September this year was a collective decision made by the Cabinet.

"The decision to terminate the KVDT2 letter of consent, where the official project agreement has yet to be signed, is not the decision of a person named Wee Ka Siong, not me, but was made by the Cabinet after considering several inputs, including that of the Attorney General's Chambers," he said.

He challenged Loke to repeat his accusations outside Parliament.

"I will certainly take legal action to clear my name," he said, adding that Loke should be mindful of his words and stop speaking like a representative of the company involved in the legal tussle.

Dr Wee said he had lodged a police report against the allegations made against him with regard to the project.

Earlier, Speaker Datuk Azhar Azizan Harun had to repeatedly ask Loke not to interrupt Dr Wee during the latter's address.

Loke had accused Dr Wee of lying and misleading the House.

"Yang Berhormat, please calm down, if not you will get a heart attack," Azhar said in a reminder to Loke.

To this, Dr Wee retorted: "If there

are any elements of lying, I will resign my post."

In 2017, the Barisan Nasional administration awarded the project to DM-LTAT but the contract was cancelled following the change of government in May 2018.

The Pakatan government, however, decided to award the project to DM-LTAT after a reduction in its scope and costs.

DM-LTAT filed a suit against the present government after the government decided to terminate the contract with the company and re-tender the project this year.

On Nov 6, Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Takiyuddin Hassan said the government was seeking an out-of-court settlement with DM-LTAT.

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Six cops under probe over missing RM1.6mil during raid

KUALA LUMPUR: Two police assistant superintendents and four policemen are being investigated over the “disappearance” of RM1.6mil in cash during a raid at an apartment unit in Bukit Segambut.

A team from the Sentul District Commercial Crime Investigation division carried out the raid on Nov 12 and arrested a married couple, both Chinese nationals, and two drivers. Cash and valuables were also seized in the operation.

Kuala Lumpur police chief Comm Datuk Saiful Azly Kamaruddin said the ASPs and policemen from the Sentul headquarters were detained on Tuesday in connection with an investigation into the claims of the missing funds.

“The case is classified under Section 380 of the Penal Code for theft in a building and Section 384 of the same code for extortion,” he said. They have since been released on police bail, he added.

Meanwhile, Bukit Aman Integrity and Standard Compliance Department (JIPS) director Comm Datuk Zamri Yahya said they were still waiting for the full report on the investigation.

“We are looking at whether the standard operating procedure was followed during the raid, the most important of which is the recording of all seized items witnessed by the individuals checked or detained.

“The individuals will then sign a form listing all valuables seized to ensure nothing is lost,” he said.

“JIPS will take action if those involved are

proven guilty. They are not only facing action under the Penal Code but they could also be suspended or terminated,” he added.

Comm Zamri said since 2016, action has been taken against about 6,000 police personnel and officers for various misconduct.

He said an average of about 1,200 personnel each year were penalised for committing various disciplinary infringements as well as criminal offences.

“However, I believe it is only just the tip of the iceberg as there are many others who have not been detected or reported.

“Among the top offences are absence from duties, failure to declare assets and having extra marital affairs. Disciplinary action taken ranged from suspension and salary reduction to job termination while for criminal offences, those involved were interdicted and dismissed from service upon conviction by the courts,” he said.

Comm Zamri said among the criminal offences were extortion, robbery and causing bodily harm.

“Others involved abuse of power which is tantamount to abetting criminals and criminal syndicates such as gambling and vice syndicates in not taking action against or busting them as the personnel and officers have been paid off.

“There was a recent case in Kulim where JIPS Bukit Aman raided several illegal gambling premises.

“The personnel there did not take action as they had been compromised and disciplinary action was taken against them,” he said.

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More linked to immigration stamp forgery held

PUTRAJAYA: Three agents for foreign workers have been detained by the anti-graft authority under Ops Selat – the nationwide blitz on an immigration stamp forgery syndicate.

The Putrajaya Magistrate's Court allowed the three to be held on remand under the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) for between five and seven days until Dec 1.

The agents were arrested in Kuala Lumpur on Tuesday evening and were brought to the Magistrate's Court yesterday for the remand application under Section 117 of the Criminal Procedure Code.

Sources said one of the agents is a lawyer while the other two were involved in foreign worker agency business.

So far, 59 people have been arrested since Ops Selat was launched on Nov 16.

This includes 15 foreign worker agents, 34 immigration officers and 10 civilians who have been acting as account mules.

The syndicate providing "stamping facilities" to foreign workers and illegal immigrants is believed to be involved in international human trafficking, particularly in China, Vietnam, Indonesia and Bangladesh.

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MACC probes claims over millions in unpaid artiste royalties

By JOSEPH KAOS Jr
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PUTRAJAYA: The Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) has launched an investigation over claims that recording artistes, comprising singers and music performers, have been denied millions of ringgit in unpaid royalties.

Officers from the anti-graft body

raided four offices belonging to companies involved in the probe and left with several important documents.

Sources said the offices raided on Wednesday were those of Public Performance Malaysia Sdn Bhd (PPM), Recording Performers Malaysia Berhad (RPM), Music Authors Copyright Protection Berhad (MACP) and the Performers' Rights

and Interest Society of Malaysia Berhad (PRISM).

"Several documents have been taken by the MACC for study and research."

"Certain individuals will also be called up to assist in the investigations," said the source.

MACC deputy chief commissioner Datuk Seri Ahmad Khusairi Yahaya confirmed that an investiga-

tion on the matter has been launched. He however said it was too early to issue a comment on the probe.

"To be fair, everyone involved should refrain from sensationalising this issue. Please give ample time for the MACC to investigate this matter in a transparent and professional manner," he said.

The investigation has been

opened under Section 18 of the MACC Act 2009, which covers false claims.

The allegation was first raised by the Malaysian Artistes Association (Karyawan) in early October, which claimed that millions of ringgit collected as royalties over the past two decades have not been distributed to singers and musicians.

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2,287 graft probes against civil servants recorded

KUALA LUMPUR: A total of 2,287 investigation papers have been opened against civil servants to probe complaints of corruption, abuse of power and misappropriation between 2016 and September 2020, says Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Takiyuddin Hassan.

"The Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC), as the main agency to fight corruption, is responsible to help ministries and government agencies, especially in examining work systems and procedures to curb all opportunities for

corruption," he said in reply to Datuk Abdullah Sani Abdul Hamid (PH-Kapar).

Abdullah Sani had asked the government to state the latest statistics on corruption offences among civil servants and steps taken to curb it.

Takiyuddin said the government took various measures to combat corruption.

"For instance, each government agency must have the right tools such as the Corruption Risk Management (CRM) and the Anti-Bribery Management System in an effort to stop corruption," he said.

He noted that 139 government agencies conducted engagements with the MACC to implement CRM while a total of 40 government agencies had done the same to implement the Organisational Anti-Corruption Plan.

Takiyuddin said the government took the initiative to include anti-corruption elements in the academic system or within the formal education at public higher learning institutions.

"The matter is in line with initiative 2.4.7 of the National Anti-Corruption Plan, which is to intro-

duce a compulsory university course at the undergraduate level that emphasises the aspect of human relations and its implications to the environment and its surroundings," he added.

Asked whether the government would expand the scope of monitoring among the top government leadership, Takiyuddin said under the MACC Act 2009, it is clear that any individuals or parties, whether alone or via a group of people, that commits any corruption offences as stated under Section 16, has committed corruption.

"It doesn't matter if they are a member of the public or government officers or top political leaders," he added.

He also pointed to another amendment under Section 17A of the MACC Act 2009 that stipulates a corporate liability principle where a commercial organisation can be considered guilty if any of its employees and associates commit corruption for the benefit of the organisation.

"That is how serious we are in fighting corruption including corruption among politicians," he said.