

**NEWS PAPER CUTTING ON MAY 2021
THE STAR**

CONTENT OF DAILY NEWS MAY 2021

BIL.	DATE	NEWS	PAGES
1.	20.05.2021	Govt Fails To Forfeit Monies	2
2.	25.05.2021	'Zahid Abused Position'	3
3.	27.05.2021	Snapped Of 60 minutes – Vaccine Astrazeneca	3
4.	27.05.2021	Second Round Of Opt-In Over In An Hour Despite Glitches	4
5.	27.05.2021	An Emotional Roller –Coaster Ride – System Registration Vaccine	5
6.	28.05.2021	'1MDB Board part Of Charade'	6
7.	29.05.2021	MACC Probes Tajuddin – Ex-Prasarana Chairman Briefly Detained Over Ower Abuse Claims	7

THE STAR/20 MAY 2021/PAGE:14

Govt fails to forfeit monies

Judge: Applicant failed to prove RM114mil came from illegal means

KUALA LUMPUR: The government has failed in its application to forfeit RM114mil allegedly belonging to Umno and former prime minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak that was seized from premises belonging to Obyu Holdings Sdn Bhd.

This followed a decision by High Court judge Datuk Muhammad Jamil Hussin in dismissing the application by the prosecution to forfeit the money that was seized by the police at Pavilion Residences on May 17, 2018.

In dismissing the application, Muhammad Jamil said the applicant had failed to prove that the money, amounting to RM114,164,393.44, was proceeds from money laundering.

However, he made no order for the money, which is with Bank Negara Malaysia, to be returned to the owners.

Umno and Najib are third party claimants to the monies.

Any third party claiming to have an interest in property seized by the government is required to appear

in court to present reasons why it should not be forfeited by the government.

In 2019, the prosecution filed a forfeiture application against Obyu Holdings to forfeit the money, as well as 11,991 units of jewellery, 401 watches and 16 watch accessories, 234 pairs of spectacles and 306 handbags.

The money and jewellery were seized by the authorities for allegedly being linked to the 1Malaysia Development Bhd (1MDB) fund scandal.

In his decision, Muhammad Jamil said the investigating officer in the money laundering case, Asst Comm D. Rajagopal, had failed to show that the money seized was stolen property or the result of breach of trust or fraud.

"ACP Rajagopal failed to disclose and identify the person/s who had been entrusted with 1MDB's money, who had dominant control over the money and misused the funds, besides failing to explain that Najib was the 1MDB agent," he noted.

He said the court found that the applicant had failed to prove the link between the money in Najib's Ambank account and the money that was seized.

The prosecution's argument that Datuk Seri Mohamed Nazir Razak had cashed a cheque drawn from Najib's account and returned RM20mil to Najib was not true, he added.

"There was also no evidence that the RM20mil received by Najib was part of the money seized. True, the money seized was found in Pavilion Residences, along with the other assets that were seized.

"Najib had also explained that he transferred RM160mil (actual amount) from Seri Perdana to Pavilion Residences.

"On the balance of probabilities, the applicant failed to prove the seized money was linked to money laundering or proceeds from unlawful activities, involving criminal breach of trust and stolen property.

"Therefore, the applicant's application is dismissed," said the judge.

After Muhammad Jamil delivered the verdict, deputy public prosecutor Muhammad Saifuddin Hashim Musalmi asked about the status of money and if there was an order for the money to be returned (to Umno and Najib).

He also applied for a stay of the court's decision, saying that the prosecution would appeal against it to the Court of Appeal.

However, Muhammad Jamil rejected the prosecution's request and on the status of the money, said: "To me, where the money was seized, is where it should be returned."

Met by reporters, Najib's lawyer Tan Sri Muhammad Shafee Abdullah said he would submit a letter to the prosecution within the next 24 hours for the money to be released to Najib and Umno. — Bernama

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TheStarTV.com



THE STAR/25 MAY 2021/PAGE:14

'Zahid abused position'

DPP: We'll prove accused was involved in amassing wealth

By WANI MUTHIAH
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SHAH ALAM: The prosecution in former deputy prime minister and home minister Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi's graft trial told the High Court here that the accused used his tenure in office to reap financial benefits.

"Throughout the four years he was the home minister, the accused had taken the opportunity of his position to amass wealth," said DPP Datuk Raja Rozela Raja Toran, who is heading the prosecution team.

She told Justice Datuk Mohd Yazid Mustafa that Ahmad Zahid, who is Umno president, had sought bribes in various currencies such as S\$14.71mil, RM3.125mil, US\$15,000 and up to €5,000.

"The accused received the monies from Ultra Kirana Sdn Bhd (UKSB)," said Raja Rozela, who is assisted by DPPs Wan Shahrudin Wan Ladin, Gan Peng Kun and Lim Wai Keong.

She said Ahmad Zahid, who is Bagan Datuk MP, was involved in and had knowledge of UKSB's appointment as contractor.

"The prosecution will present oral statements and documents to prove this fact," she said.

She added that UKSB was appointed by the Federal Government as contractor to carry out supply and services work for the Home Ministry.

"UKSB's appointment was made in accordance with several agreements signed between the Malaysian government and UKSB," said Raja Rozela.

According to her, the court will hear statements by several witnesses who will explain the facts in detail as well as when and how the bribes were accepted by the accused.

"At the end of the prosecution's case, Yang Arif will see the existence of a close link between the facts of UKSB's appointment as contractor and acceptance of the cash by the accused," she said.

She added that links between the two parties were important to prove that Ahmad Zahid had received bribes as payment and inducement to retain and/or extend UKSB's appointment contract.



Court date:
Ahmad Zahid at the Shah Alam High Court on the first day of his trial. — KK SHAM/The Star

Raja Rozela said the prosecution would call at least 20 witnesses and would depend on documentation evidence, direct evidence and circumstantial evidence to prove its case.

She said the evidence presented would prove that Ahmad Zahid had indeed committed the crime as stipulated in each charge.

The prosecution also called its first witness, Companies Commission of Malaysia assistant registrar Muhamad Akmaluddin Abdullah, 38, who explained in his witness statement that the nature of UKSB's business was providing services revolving around visas and other related services.

In an immediate response as soon as proceedings ended, Ahmad Zahid's defence team of Datuk Ahmad Zaidi Zainal dan Hamidi Mohd Noh issued a media statement refuting the prosecution's opening statement.

The statement said the defence team would prove Ahmad Zahid did not receive any financial inducement.

It also added that UKSB's appointment was not made during Ahmad Zahid's tenure as home minister.

The defence team also said it would prove that the accusations

made against Ahmad Zahid were politically motivated and selective prosecution geared towards character assassination.

Yesterday's hearing started off with the court interpreter painstakingly reading out the 40 charges levelled against Ahmad Zahid.

Out of the 40 charges, he faced 33 charges for allegedly receiving S\$13.56mil as financial inducement from UKSB in his capacity as a civil servant and home minister to extend the company's contract to operate the one-stop centre in China and the foreign visa system (VLN) as well as to maintain the agreement to supply VLN integrated system paraphernalia to the same company by the ministry.

Ahmad Zahid, 68, who looked dapper in a dark suit, had been charged in mid 2019 under Section 16 (a)(B) of the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) Act 2009 for the 33 accusations.

He can be punished under Section 24(1) of the same Act and if found guilty faces a jail term up to 20 years and a fine not less than five times of the value of the gratification or RM10,000 whichever is higher.

For the next seven charges, Ahmad Zaid was accused of accept-

ing S\$1.15mil, RM3mil, €15,000 and US\$15,000 in cash from the same company as home minister in spite of knowing its (company's) link with his ministerial portfolio.

He was charged under Section 165 of the Penal Code for the seven accusations and faced up to two years imprisonment or a fine or both if found guilty.

He also faced 33 alternative charges under Section 165 of the Penal Code for receiving bribes amounting to S\$13.56mil for the VLN system in his capacity as home minister.

He had allegedly committed the offences between 2014 and 2018 at the deputy prime minister's official residence Seri Satria, Precinct 16, Putrajaya, and in a house at Country Heights, Kajang.

Ahmad Zahid also has an ongoing trial at the Kuala Lumpur High Court in which he faced 47 charges of alleged criminal breach of trust, corruption and money laundering in relation to monies belonging to Yayasan Akalbudi.

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Nation

Tajuddin removed as Prasarana chairman >6

Snapped up in 60 minutes

Nearly a million Malaysians got their slot to receive the AstraZeneca Covid-19 vaccination in the latest opt-in registration exercise. The Covid-19 Immunisation Task Force apologised to Malaysians for technical glitches during the process. > See page 2 for stories by JO TIMBUONG, ALLISON LAI and ASHLEY TANG



Happy and thankful: Mas Aniza Norazemi (left) with her best friend Mona Asfariqa Taslim happily showing the successful AstraZeneca vaccine slot registration after getting their swab test at the Selangor's DUN Paya Jaras free Covid-19 mass screening at Dewan MBSA Seri Pagi Kampung Paya Jaras U19, Shah Alam. — IZZRAFIQ ALIAS/The Star

Reports by JO TIMBUONG, ALLISON LAI and ASHLEY TANG

Second round of opt-in over in an hour despite glitches

PETALING JAYA: Within an hour, nearly one million of the AstraZeneca vaccination slots were taken up in the second round of registration.

In a statement, Covid-19 Immunisation Task Force (CITF) said over 950,000 doses of the vaccine were snapped up by Malaysians aged 18 and above.

The task force also apologised to Malaysians over the technical glitches throughout the registration process that left many frustrated.

"A total of 1.261 million doses of AstraZeneca were offered, of which 275,208 doses were taken up by senior citizens when the opt-in was first opened on May 23.

"For the record, a total of 956,609 slots were taken up today (yesterday).

"Meanwhile, a total of 29,183 peo-

ple on the AstraZeneca waiting list previously have been included this time," it said in the statement yesterday.

The opt-in, which is an offshoot from the mainstream National Covid-19 Immunisation Programme, saw about a million slots up for grabs for those living in Kuala Lumpur, Selangor, Penang, Johor and Sarawak.

This was after an earlier registration drive for those over 60 opened on May 23 where 228,347 of the initial 1.2 million slots were taken.

While many anticipated technical glitches to get in the way, they were not ready to face it multiple times as the system evidently buckled under the frenzy of people trying to get a slot - leaving many with their hopes dashed.

The process was filled with chal-



lenges from the get-go with the registration kick-off delayed by 15 minutes as the technical team worked to update the website at www.vak-sincovid.gov.my.

CITF posted an update on Twitter at noon, informing users that the website would only be ready by 12.15pm.

But even at the revised time, applicants complained about receiving a notification telling them they had been blocked from the website.

There were also those who received a message indicating that there were too many access requests.

The website was finally accessible around 12.20pm. However, the problems did not end there.

From then on, there were endless complaints about applicants not being able to click on their respective states to get to the page with the appointment grid.

Some complained of having to refresh numerous times after being kicked out of the registration page, having to go through multiple times of "I am not a robot" verification.

There were also complaints of applicants not receiving a message after completing their registration, leaving them wondering if their applications went through.

On the bright side, many success-

fully managed to register.

Close to 1pm, CITF tweeted that more than 300,000 of the vaccine slots had been taken.

At 1.22pm, the high hopes of applicants came crashing down as the CITF announced that registration was closed.

"Appointment booking for the second round of the AstraZeneca Voluntary Vaccine Initiative is now closed. Those who are eligible will receive an appointment soon.

"Thank you for your interest in helping the nation achieve herd immunity," it said on Twitter.

Comparatively, registrations closed after about three-and-a-half hours in the first round of the AstraZeneca opt-in programme with all 268,800 slots taken and some applicants being put on a waiting list.

An emotional roller-coaster ride

Many find vaccine registration process an unpleasant experience

PETALING JAYA: Relieved, happy, frustrated, and angry, are some of the words used by Malaysians aged below 60 to describe their experience when trying to get a slot for the second round of the AstraZeneca vaccine opt-in registration.

Content creator Hafiz Hadi, 37, from Shah Alam whose multiple attempts bore fruit after he clicked on the "submit" button repeatedly for over 15 minutes.

"Not wanting to waste time, I just clicked on a random date once I got through.

"I only remember clicking and acknowledging the pages because I was worried about getting stuck after seeing so many friends who were unsuccessful," he said, adding that it felt surreal seeing the "thank you" page.

Hafiz, however, said he could not remember the date of his appointment, as everything happened too fast.

"I'll wait for the SMS or MySejahtera update within 48 hours," he said, adding that the government could be more prepared for a system glitch as it was not the first time they used it for vaccine opt-in based on a first-come, first-served basis.

"They could have had a dry run a few days before the day, or open up the opt-in in stages for different

"The technical team needs to relook the portal's whole architecture. There must have been something wrong with the scheduler function which prevented real-time updates."

Luqman Mohd Hatta

states if they can't handle the massive requests on their website," he added.

Luqman Mohd Hatta was another lucky person who managed to get a slot for the AstraZeneca vaccine when it was opened to those below 60 years yesterday, but not without some hurdles.

"It was not a pleasant experience and I think many would agree with me on that," said the 39-year-old ecosystem development manager.

Describing it as an anxiety-ridden hour, he said, he refreshed both his laptop and mobile phone when the site wouldn't properly load the page to show the list of available appointment dates.

He even tried the process on Google Chrome and Microsoft Edge browsers and was finally able to complete his registration using the latter.

Luqman said the registration problem could have been due to the system crashing from a heavy load, which could have been avoided if it was done in phases based on the applicant's age and location.

"The technical team needs to relook the portal's whole architecture. There must have been something wrong with the scheduler function which prevented real-time updates," he said.

A lorry driver who only wants to be known as ND from Kota Damansara said the adrenaline rush when registering for a slot was unforgettable.

"I felt compelled to register myself for this after seeing other family members who got jabbed in the first round were fine with it.

"I'm happy that I managed to register within 10 minutes of logging in," he said.

ND, who is in his 40s, said both his parents, who are above 60, registered several days ago when the opt-in was opened for senior citizens.

"I'm looking forward to my appointment on July 6 at Universiti Malaya. I just can't wait to pose for a 'I have been vaccinated' photo and make it my online profile picture," he added.

Edwin Lim, 52, was not as lucky but was happy that his wife managed to register.

He almost got his chance when he was brought to the page to select his appointment but was unceremoniously kicked out of the registration page.

"It took me about 45 minutes to get there only to start the whole process again and by that time, I couldn't even go through the site requesting for my state," he said, adding that he would just have to wait his turn through the MySejahtera app.

Elizabeth Tan, 40, said she managed to get through with the assistance of two friends.

"I tried numerous times but I did not get in as the appointment dates for the states did not appear no matter how many times I tried.

"My friends helped me register. I am very fortunate," the senior manager said.

A 29-year-old woman, who only wanted to be known as Karen, was disappointed that she could not register.

"It was a hard battle. I tried using my tablet, laptop, mobile phone, but all were unsuccessful.

"The next thing I knew, I was back on the main page and the website did not allow me to register for the vaccine anymore.

"A friend told me that the vaccines have all been taken up. I am really angry actually because firstly the registration did not open on time at noon," she said.

"It got delayed and by 1.30pm it had the cheek to tell me it was full.

"I believe the government can come up with a better system, this is the third time they had opened the registration for AstraZeneca and there are still glitches. Did they not learn from their past experiences?"

The freelancer added that there would not have been a rush for the AstraZeneca vaccine if the National Covid-19 Immunisation Programme was done quickly and effectively.



Good response shows people's confidence in AZ vaccine
See page 7

The Star | 28 May 2021 | Page 13

'1MDB board part of charade'

Funds to Umno were kept off the record, says witness

By NURBAITI HAMDAN
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KUALA LUMPUR: The board of directors of 1Malaysia Development Bhd (1MDB) were part of a "sandiwara" (charade) that had kept the information about 1MDB's money being channelled to Umno out of official records, the High Court heard.

Former 1MDB CEO Mohd Hazem Abdul Rahman said this at the RM2.28bil 1MDB trial involving former prime minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak here yesterday.

The 10th witness in the trial had said in his witness statement that Umno (of which Najib was president at the time) had benefited from 1MDB monies.

During the cross-examination by lawyer Wan Aizuddin Wan Mohamad, the witness was asked about

1MDB's bid to repatriate its funds from overseas investments in 2014.

Hazem said those on the board knew the "real purpose" of the money, which was implied to be for the use of Umno.

Wan Aizuddin: Is there a reason for you to say that everybody on the board knew the money belonged to Umno, that everyone knew the real purpose of the money?

Mohd Hazem: Yes.

Wan Aizuddin: Why didn't you put it on record (official 1MDB meeting minutes) that these funds belong to Umno?

Mohd Hazem: This is a scheme. It shouldn't be on record.

Wan Aizuddin: So you are saying that this is a conspiracy that all the board members participated in?

Mohd Hazem: Yes.

The defence counsel then suggested that what was reported in

the minutes was "just for show".

"They (board members) knew what was at stake," Mohd Hazem replied.

Wan Aizuddin: So you are saying that whatever was recorded in the minutes about repatriation of the funds was a *sandiwara* (charade)?

Mohd Hazem: Yes.

The witness was also referred to his witness statement, where he said he had met Najib at the latter's house on Dec 15, 2013, for a discussion.

Wan Aizuddin then said that meeting was one of the two meetings where Mohd Hazem would have had the chance to tell Najib about his "reservation and suspicions" on the operations of 1MDB.

"These meetings were not one-on-one," Mohd Hazem replied.

Wan Aizuddin: You could have just approached him afterwards.

Mohd Hazem: There is no point for me to ask if he already knows.

Wan Aizuddin: During these meetings, was there anything coming straight from my client's mouth that these funds were for Umno?

Mohd Hazem: No (never heard from Najib himself).

Wan Aizuddin: And the only basis of your belief (that the 1MDB overseas funds belonged to Umno) was what was told to you by (fugitive financier) Low Taek Jho?

Mohd Hazem: Low and (Najib's late principal private secretary) Datuk Azlin Alias.

Najib, 68, is facing four charges of abusing his position to obtain gratification totalling RM2.28bil in 1MDB funds and 21 counts of money laundering involving the same money.

The hearing continues on Monday before Justice Collin Lawrence Sequerah.

The Star | 29 May 2021 | Page 5

MACC probes Tajuddin

Ex-Prasarana chairman briefly detained over power abuse claims

By MAZWAN NIK ANIS, FARIK
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PUTRAJAYA: After his press conference debacle and termination as Prasarana chairman, Datuk Seri Tajuddin Abdul Rahman made news again when he was arrested to assist an investigation into claims of power abuse.

Sources confirmed that "elements of power abuse" were the focus of the probe.

It is learnt that this was not the first time the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) had called in Tajuddin for his statement.

"We are looking into claims that he (Tajuddin) abused his position as Prasarana chairman on several matters," said a source, adding the case was being investigated under Section 23 of the MACC Act.

Asked on allegations that Tajuddin had used his position on the

matter of appointments, the same source said this was also being investigated.

Tajuddin's tenure as Prasarana non-executive chairman was terminated on May 26, a little more than a year after his appointment to the post on May 11 last year.

Prior to this, he was widely criticised on social media for his performance at the press conference a day after the LRT Kelana Jaya line train collision in Kuala Lumpur on Monday.

The Pasir Salak MP was called to the MACC headquarters here on Thursday and he arrived at 11am.

As part of the investigation procedure, he was arrested to assist in the probe.

"He was detained so that investigators could record his statement. He was released on bail after they questioned him," said a source, adding that this was a normal procedure during questioning.

His arrest was brief as Tajuddin

was believed to have been released just over an hour later.

Asked if he would be charged, the source said this would be decided by the Attorney-General's Chambers (AGC).

As of press time, MACC had yet to release an official statement on the matter.

Earlier this month, MACC chief commissioner Datuk Seri Azam Baki had said that investigation papers over alleged abuse of power within Prasarana had been submitted to AGC.

In January, MACC "visited" Prasarana's head office and took several documents.

There were allegations of a conflict of interest in the Latitud8 project – a transit-oriented development located above the Dang Wangi LRT station in Kuala Lumpur – with reports claiming that Tajuddin's family members were involved in it.

He was also called up by the police on Thursday for allegedly

flouting Covid-19 standard operating procedure during the press conference for not wearing a mask under his face shield.

Yesterday, Tajuddin, who is Umno's election director, was spotted at the party headquarters in Kuala Lumpur.

His press officer Rozairi Abdul Rahman confirmed that Tajuddin was there for a meeting.

"He was at his office in Menara Datuk Onn between 9am and 11.30am to handle party matters, including a meeting," said Rozairi.

Tajuddin also posted photos of himself at the Umno headquarters with the caption: "Road to GE15. I am at Menara Datuk Onn to chair the Umno election secretariat meeting on the party's preparation for the coming GE15."

Watch the video
TheStarTV.com

