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# Fortunes from misfortunes

## MACC probing 25 cases of Covid-19 mismanagement

**PUTRAJAYA:** A total of 25 investigation papers on alleged mismanagement of Covid-19 involving various offences have been opened, says Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) chief commissioner Tan Sri Azam Baki.

He said the MACC would summon those involved to assist in the investigations and would also inform accordingly the developments of the cases.

"Many individuals have been and will be called as each case is different," he told reporters after launching a Journalist Empowering Programme with the MACC.

He did not rule out the possibility the cases involved various agencies, including the Health Ministry.

On whether former health minister Datuk Seri Dr Adham Baba would be called to help in the investigations, Azam said any possible action would be taken, depending on the need.

On May 25, the MACC chief commissioner said corruption involving the procurement of medical equipment and medicine was uncovered during the Covid-19 pandemic.

"During the pandemic, many nations were dishing out economic assistance and making medical equipment and medicine purchases through emergency funds.

"But it is sad that some of these purchases are mired with corruption in a pandemic and a state of emergency.

"This shows some unscrupulous people



**Inspecting graft:** Azam speaking to reporters after launching a Journalist Empowering Programme with the MACC in Putrajaya. — Bernama

are still taking the opportunity to make illegal monies from people's pain and misfortunes," he said.

Following the disclosure, Dr Adham said he would cooperate with the MACC.

Dr Adham, who held the portfolio when the country was facing the pandemic, admitted to having personally received such complaints, explaining that these occurred at the administrative level.

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## MALAYSIA TO ENHANCE EXPORTS THROUGH NATIONAL TRADE BLUEPRINT

**KUALA LUMPUR:** The global economic environment currently presents both challenges and opportunities for Malaysia as it re-emerges from the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Not to let a crisis go to waste, the Government has emphasised on realigning growth in a sustainable trajectory, which includes restoring the growth momentum of key economic sectors, and propelling strategic and high impact industries including micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs).

These are of vital importance as Malaysia sets its sights on becoming a high-income nation driven by advanced technology, which will see the country move towards high value-added and high-skilled economic activities.

Against this backdrop and given the significant contribution of trade to Malaysia's economy, the Malaysia External Trade Development Corporation (MATRADE) developed the National Trade Blueprint (NTBp).

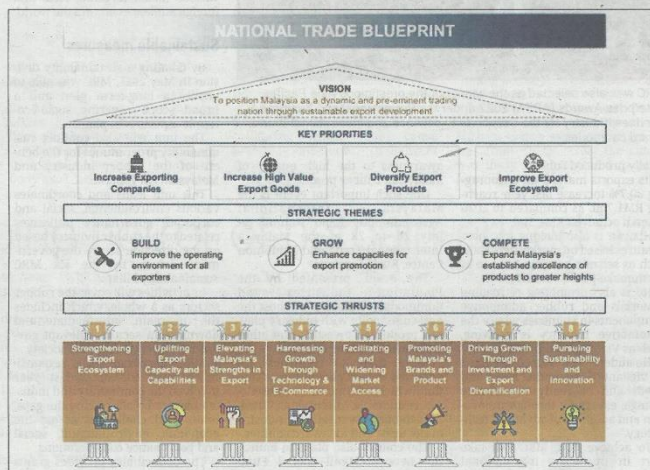
It is the first blueprint of its kind, commissioned by the International Trade and Industry Ministry (MITI). The NTBp was launched by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob on Oct 25, 2021.

"NTBp outlines a five-year (2021-2025) development strategy and initiatives to enhance the nation's export competitiveness through the strengthening of the business ecosystem and to improve Malaysia's position as a leading exporting country globally in the merchandise sector," said MATRADE chief executive officer Mohd Mustafa Abdul Aziz.

This is led by four key priorities, three strategic themes and eight strategic thrusts (see infographic).

Eight working groups have been formed to implement the recom-

NTBp outlines five-year (2021-2025) development strategy and initiatives



mendations put forth by the NTBp - Trade Facilitation; Logistics; Standards and Conformance; Trade Promotion and Market Access; Sustainability and Innovation; Digitalisation and Technology; Investment; and Branding.

The working groups comprise relevant members from the public sector, and representatives from various ministries and agencies, the private sector, business communities and trade associations.

The NTBp also leverages on the Jawatankuasa Koordinasi Export (JK-X), chaired by the Chief Secretary to the Government as the governing and supervising body on the implementation of the 40 recommendations and the 127 initiatives under the blueprint. The committee meets thrice a year.

The working groups have hit the ground running such as the logistics unit, whereby the Transport Ministry has revised the policy to

allow sharing of prime movers and trailers within the same group of companies.

This reduces capital and operating cost by 10% to 20% to resolve the issue of high ancillary port charges, contributed by the ability of transport companies to optimise existing partnerships without having to increase the number of trailers.

Similarly, under the Trade Promotion and Market Access

working group, MATRADE is currently coordinating the development of the Single Information Portal for Export (SIPE) and Integrated Trade Events Platform (ITEP). These initiatives are to address the immediate needs arising from the pandemic to boost Malaysia's trade competitiveness.

SIPE will be a comprehensive portal encompassing information across the export value chain while ITEP will be a dedicated platform to connect foreign buyers or investors with Malaysian companies.

The main benefits of these platforms include stronger nation-branding; streamlining efforts and reduced cost of export promotion; better coordination of national events; and, big data analytics, among others.

"On the whole, the NTBp serves as an important agenda for the development of Malaysia's exports, which in turn delivers a positive impact for the nation. The higher revenue from exports leads to more opportunities to improve the country's infrastructure and facilities," Mustafa said.

The investment and business export activities are also set to generate better employment opportunities whilst spurring quality education, which is needed to provide skilled manpower and talent to meet industry needs.

It also pushes Malaysia a step closer towards a higher income nation status and improving the lives and livelihood of the people.

The success of the NTBp requires concerted efforts from both the public and private sectors to develop a conducive business ecosystem that is essential for exports to thrive.

## Senior exec and wife remanded over bribe

PUTRAJAYA: A senior executive in a government-linked company and his wife have been remanded to help in a probe into claims that they had asked and received money totalling more than RM600,000 for appointing a transportation company to deliver goods.

The husband and wife, who are in their 50s and 40s respectively, were arrested at their home in Petaling Jaya at about 7pm on Saturday, according to sources.

They were brought before magistrate Shah Wira Abdul Halim yesterday. The court allowed for the suspects to be remanded for six days until June 10.

It is learnt that the man had demanded for a "monthly payment" of about RM20,000.

"The money is his 'reward' for appointing the transport company to deliver petroleum-based products across the country for a period between July 2019 and April this year," the sources added.

The woman is believed to be in cahoots with her husband and had asked for and accepted money on his behalf.

It is learnt that the senior executive had been suspended from his duties at the company.

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## Telco CEO remanded over bribe amounting to over RM200,000

**JOHOR BARU:** The chief executive officer of a telecommunication company has been arrested on suspicion of graft involving more than RM200,000.

Johor Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) director Datuk Azmi Alias confirmed that the 43-year-old suspect was arrested at the Selangor MACC office at around 8pm Monday.

The suspect was said to have asked for

and accepted more than RM200,000 as an inducement to approve a project to build and repair telecommunication towers worth close to RM50mil in April last year.

The suspect was brought to the Shah Alam Magistrate's Court on yesterday, where magistrate Mohamad Redza Azhar Rezali allowed him to be remanded for four days for investigation.

The suspect will be remanded until June 17 for investigations under 16 (a) (A) of the MACC Act 2009, said Azmi.

Meanwhile, Bernama reported that MACC's application to remand a senior enforcement officer and a businesswoman for four days and two days respectively from yesterday was allowed by the court.

According to the source, the senior

enforcement officer was believed to have asked and received RM200,000 from several individuals employing foreign workers illegally as a reward for facilitating the pass applications of foreign workers.

The businesswoman was investigated for abetting with the senior officer.

They were detained by MACC yesterday at 7.40pm and 7.45pm and will be investigated under Section 17 (a) of the MACC Act 2009.

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## First audit report not submitted 'due to meeting'

By NURBAITI HAMDAN  
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**KUALA LUMPUR:** The High Court was told the first version of an audit report on 1Malaysia Development Bhd (1MDB) dubbed "Watermark 09" would have been submitted to the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) had it not been for a meeting held on Feb 24, 2016.

This was testified by former 1MDB CEO Arul Kanda Kandasamy, 46, in the 1MDB audit tampering trial involving him and former prime minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak yesterday.

In an examination-in-chief, lead prosecutor Datuk Seri Gopal Sri Ram told the co-accused-turned-witness that there was evidence from other witnesses who testified in the trial.

Sri Ram: You were in court listening to that evidence.

Arul Kanda: Yes.

Sri Ram: Do you agree with that evidence?

Arul Kanda: Yes.

The court had previously heard of the Feb 24 "coordination meeting" held between 1MDB and other agencies, chaired by former chief secretary to the government, the late Tan Sri Ali Hamsa, at the behest of Najib.

Arul Kanda testified that he had attended the Feb 24 meeting where he first saw Watermark 09 at the end of the meeting.

He said it was a concern during the meeting that the findings of the report (Watermark 09) "may be spun politically".

Sri Ram: Spun to whose detriment?



**Hearing to resume:**  
Najib (right) arriving at Kuala Lumpur Courts Complex.  
— Bernama

Arul Kanda: My understanding is that it would be spun towards Najib's detriment.

The witness also testified of an "unusual" meeting held at the Kiara Hills home of former TV3 CEO Datuk Seri Ahmad Farid Ridzuan, who was Najib's special officer at that time, on Dec 1, 2015.

He said former 1MDB CEO Datuk Shahrol Azral Ibrahim Halimi, former PAC chairman Datuk Hasan Arifin, and two or three PAC members were in attendance.

Sri Ram: What was the purpose of meeting at Farid's house?

Arul Kanda: (To discuss) what I would be presenting to PAC about 1MDB's affairs.

Sri Ram: Did you receive any instructions from anyone in that meeting on how you should address the PAC?

Arul Kanda: It was more of me sharing information (to them) than them telling me what to do.

Sri Ram: What was the purpose of having a meeting with Hasan?

Arul Kanda: I found it unusual to have that session with him, but I was asked to do so, and I did it.

The witness was also asked about the roadshows or "ceramah" he conducted as instructed by Najib before the 14th General Election in 2018.

"He (Najib) wanted me to explain 1MDB, the issues the company faces, the rationalisation plans," he said.

Arul Kanda said he would use a PowerPoint presentation to deliver his "ceramah" and defend 1MDB's interest as well as field both "supportive and non-supportive" questions from the public when it came to Najib.

To the questions on Najib from the public, Arul Kanda said he would be answering them based on statements by the then-Attorney General (that exonerated Najib) and

the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission.

"Typically, what I would do, I would invite the audience to come up with their conclusions.

"The phrase I usually say is 'terpulang kepada tuan-tuan dan puan-puan untuk buat keputusan sewajarnya' (it is up to you, ladies and gentlemen, to decide).

"I do recall using that phrase quite a bit," he added.

Earlier in the proceedings, High Court judge Justice Mohamed Zaini Mazlan allowed an application by the prosecution to call Arul Kanda to testify as a prosecution witness under Section 63 of the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) Act 2009.

The judge said he was satisfied with the prosecution's grounds for the application and that there was no hindrance to the application at any stage in the prosecution's case.

Najib, 69, is accused of abusing his position to order amendments to the 1MDB final audit report to avoid any action against him, while Arul Kanda is accused of abetting Najib in making the amendments.

Both men face charges under Section 23(1) of the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) Act 2009, which provides a jail term of up to 20 years and a fine of no less than five times the amount of gratification or RM10,000, whichever is higher, upon conviction.

The hearing resumes on July 4.

Watch the video  
TheStarTV.com

