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Datuk nabbed over evasion of crude palm oil sales tax

KOTA KINABALU: Graft busters have arrested a "Datuk" in connection with the multimillion-ringgit evasion of Sabah's crude palm oil sales tax. The arrest of the 66-year-old suspect yesterday comes after the detention of two state government officials, one of whom had retired just two days ago.

According to sources from the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC), the Datuk is a former civil servant.

"He was arrested when he came to provide his statement (over the tax evasion case) at the Sabah MACC headquarters at about 4pm

today (yesterday)," the source said.

Sabah MACC director Datuk S. Karunanithy confirmed the arrest when contacted.

He said the suspect will be investigated under Section 17(a) of the MACC Act 2009.

He added that MACC will apply for a remand order against the suspect at the Magistrate's Court here today.

Karunanithy urged oil palm operators from Sabah to come forward and assist MACC in its probe.

"False declarations (of sales taxes) are an offence under Section 18 of the MACC Act

2009," he said.

On May 18, a senior official with the state Finance Ministry and a retired senior government officer were arrested in connection with the case. They were believed to have received RM700,000 in bribes from a palm oil mill in Lahad Datu to "overlook" the mill's falsification of the quantity of crude palm oil produced to evade state taxes worth about RM2mil a month since 2015.

The court has since granted a seven-day remand order against the two suspects, from May 19 to 25.

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Man charged under Whistleblower Act freed

KUALA LUMPUR: A former Education Malaysia Global Services (EMGS) deputy director, who was the first person to be charged under the Whistleblower Protection Act 2010, has been acquitted by the Sessions Court here over allegations of inciting a whistleblower to be sacked.

Wafiy Abd Aziz, 37, was given a discharge and acquittal after Sessions Court judge Suzana Hussin ruled that the prosecution had failed to prove a prima facie case against the accused.

"After hearing the testimonies from prosecution witnesses and

submissions from the defence and prosecution, the court finds the prosecution has failed to prove its case.

"The accused is therefore discharged and acquitted, and the RM15,000 bail is returned. The trial dates that had been fixed before are now vacated," she said yesterday.

Wafiy was the first person to be charged under the Act after it came into effect in 2010.

According to the charge sheet, Wafiy allegedly incited then EMGS chairman Datuk Abdul Rahman Mohamed Shariff to sign a termi-

nation of employment document against the whistleblower as retaliation for exposing the accused's improper misconduct to the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) on Jan 9, 2020.

As a result, the whistleblower lost his job.

The offence was allegedly committed at the EMGS office in Jalan Mayang Sari.

Under Section 10(3)(b) of the Act, the offence carries a maximum RM100,000 fine or 15 years in jail or both, if convicted. He was given bail of RM15,000.

After the proceedings, Wafiy, who was represented by lawyer Datuk Dr Baljit Singh Sidhu, hugged his wife in the public gallery.

Deputy public prosecutor Mohd Afif Ali from the MACC appeared for the prosecution.

The trial began on April 27, 2021, with 17 prosecution witnesses taking the stand.

Watch the video
TheStarTV.com



Graft probes in relation to Covid-19 underway

PUTRAJAYA: Corruption involving the procurement of medical equipment and medicine was uncovered during the Covid-19 pandemic, says anti-graft chief Tan Sri Azam Baki.

The Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) chief said that among the investigations it embarked on in relation to Covid-19 were the abuse of power in diverting relief aid, fraud related to falsified medical protective equipment and the bribery of enforcement officers when enforcing the movement control order.

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

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

"This shows that there are some unscrupulous people who are still taking the opportunity to make illegal monies from people's pain and misfortunes," said Azam in his keynote address during the opening of the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Forum here yesterday.

The MACC, he said, worked round the clock to ensure that corruption was well checked in the country, adding that in 2021, it opened 829 investigation papers which resulted in 851 arrests.

"As of April this year, we have opened 379 investigation papers and arrested 425 individuals," he said.

On the investigation into the 1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB) scandal, Azam said the anti-graft body had recovered about RM20bil worth of assets by way of compound and settlement.

"The work is not done yet and we will continue to further repatriate those stolen assets.

"It is hoped that more people will join the call to demand that all perpetrators of this crime pay for their evil actions," he said.

Malaysia's experience of handling and recovering huge sums of assets in the 1MDB case had received praise from many parties abroad, he added.

"Since 2018, the government has been actively pursuing the 1MDB-related cases on all fronts. This has brought about the prosecutions of some high-ranking senior government officials and politicians.

"MACC works with a number of international bodies and foreign law enforcement agencies to repatriate criminal proceeds from the 1MDB case to Malaysia.

"All these asset recovery efforts could not have been successful without the assistance of our various counterparts. These foreign agencies are part of Malaysia's success in bringing back ill-gotten gains from abroad," said Azam.