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Four charged with submitting false Socso claims

KUALA LUMPUR: Four individuals were charged in three separate Sessions Courts here with submitting false documents to the Social Security Organisation (Socso) to claim incentives under the Penjana Kerjaya Programme 2.0 amounting to RM504,460.

NVDS Technology Sdn Bhd chief executive Md Zaidi Muhammad, 45, claimed trial to one charge before Judge Rozina Ayob.

Mohamed Hazzri Mohamed, a former company director for Lan Trading & Construction Con and Haz Printing Sdn Bhd, pleaded not guilty to two charges in the same court.

Md Zaidi had allegedly submitted the Hiring Incentive Programme

employee verification form to claim incentives amounting to RM343,660.

The document listed names of people who were not employees of the company.

Mohamed Hazzri, allegedly submitted the same form dated June 3 and June 29, 2021, to Socso's employment services officers to claim incentives amounting to RM40,900.

Meanwhile, Mohamed Hazzri and the owner of Ilham Diya Enterprise Nor Rizan Zakaria, 59, claimed trial before Judge Suzana Hussin to one charge of providing verification forms containing false information dated March 6 and May 29, 2021, to claim incentives amounting to RM110,800.

Meanwhile, Bmine Enterprise manager Muhammad Asyraf Omar, 31, claimed trial before judge Azura Alwi for the same offence using verification forms dated July 31 to claim RM9,100.

They were charged under Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) Act 2009 and if convicted face a maximum imprisonment of 20 years and a fine of not less than five times the amount of the false information or RM10,000 whichever is higher.

Zaidi and Hazzri were allowed RM25,000 and RM10,000 bail each with one surety while Suzana's court granted RM16,000 bail to Hazzri and Nor Rizan respectively with one surety.

Both courts also ordered all the accused to surrender their passports and report to the MACC office once a month pending the disposal of the case, Bernama reported.

Meanwhile, Azura set RM5,000 bail for Asyraf with one surety with the same additional conditions regarding his passport as well as reporting to MACC.

The prosecution was conducted by MACC Deputy Public Prosecutors Mohamad Fadhly Mohd Zamry, A. Kalaivani and Atiqah Alias.

Md Zaidi was represented by lawyer Azalea Nazihah Zulkefli and Nor Rizan by lawyer Hasmah Nordin while Hazzri and Asyraf were unrepresented.

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Mindef satisfied with progress of LCS project

LUMUT: The Defence Ministry (Mindef) is satisfied with the status of the littoral combat ship (LCS) construction project, with one of the six ships expected to be ready next year, says its minister Datuk Seri Mohamad Hasan.

He said his visit to the Royal Malaysian Navy base here found that overall, the construction of the ships was on schedule.

"For the first ship, there is only one more block to complete, and it won't take long. The engine, propeller, and gearbox have been installed, only the electrical equipment and weapons (have yet to be installed).

"I am confident that this first ship will be ready in 2024 before undertaking seawater testing and being commissioned," he said.

Mohamad said he had consulted the Finance Ministry, Economy Ministry and Mindef so as to be able to explain the actual situation on the LCS issue.

The Public Accounts Committee (PAC), in its report on Aug 4 last year, said the government had paid RM6.083bil to Boustead Naval Shipyard Sdn Bhd (BNS) in a deal that was allegedly awarded via direct negotiation, but not a single vessel had been delivered.

On Oct 2 last year, former defence minister Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Hussein said the construction of the LCS project would resume as soon as negotiations ended in December 2022.

When asked about the status of



Site visit:
Mohamad arriving at the Royal Malaysian Navy base in Lumut. With him is TLDM Air Force Base Air Commander First Admiral Ahmad Shafirudin Abu Bakar. — Bernama

the other ships, Mohamad said they would take about two to three years to complete.

"... some need to be checked in terms of leaks, artillery, and the ECU (electronic control unit).

"We hope that all previous problems will be resolved. This includes the issue with middlemen, which is almost resolved where from now on we will directly deal with the

vendors only.

"There are also some who ask why we continued this LCS project (despite the ongoing economic uncertainty), and my answer is simple – matters pertaining to national sovereignty and defence cannot be compromised.

"You can say whatever you like, but Mindef remains focused on this," he added.

Meanwhile, Mohamad said all 39 blocks of housing quarters for members of the Armed Forces and civil servants in the area would be upgraded in stages for the comfort of the residents.

Yesterday's programme was also attended by Navy chief Admiral Tan Sri Mohd Reza Mohd Sany and Mindef secretary-general Datuk Seri Muez Abd Aziz. — Bernama

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Minister: SOP breach led to RM100k school aid theft

By MANJIT KAUR
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IPOH: The standard operating procedure (SOP) was breached in the case of a headmaster who lost more than RM100,000 student aid when he left the money in the car to go for a drink, says Education Minister Fadhlina Sidek.

Under the SOP, any amount more than RM10,000 would require escort from the police or other teachers.

"In this case, the amount was more than RM100,000. The SOP has definitely been breached," she said, adding that there was "probably negligence".

The headmaster had withdrawn RM109,000 from a bank in Kampung Baru Semenyih on Monday.

He kept it in a bag in the front passenger seat of his car and then went to get a drink from a nearby restaurant in Semenyih.

A thief broke into the headmaster's car and fled with the money, which was the ministry's financial aid to the school.

Speaking to reporters yesterday after visiting SK Chepor to check on the upgrade of the school's facilities, Fadhlina said the ministry

would not compromise on any case involving negligence.

"I view this case very seriously. We will wait for the police investigation and the Selangor Education Department's report before deciding on the next course of action," she said.

She said the students had the right to receive the aid.

"We have a process to go through when negligence is involved.

"The students will definitely receive what they are due," she added.

Separately, Kajang district police chief Asst Comm Mohd Zaid Hassan said that based on a statement by the 50-year-old headmaster, it was normal for him to make such a transaction without a police escort.

"According to the headmaster, he had been doing it for 10 years and during the period, had never requested a police escort.

"It is regrettable that he did not request it because the school can ask for the help of the police for the purpose," he told a press conference after launching Op Selamat 19/13 in

conjunction with Chinese New Year 2023 at the South Kajang Toll Plaza, Kajang-Seremban Highway (Lekas) yesterday.



School visit: Fadhlina spending time with the pupils after visiting SK Chepor to check on the upgrade of the school's facilities. — RONNIE CHIN/The Star

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Businessman denies submitting false Socso claims for RM1.26mil

KUALA LUMPUR: A businessman pleaded not guilty in a Sessions Court here to six counts of submitting false documents to Socso to claim incentives amounting to RM1.26mil under the Penjana Kerjaya 2.0 programme.

M. Karthikesan, 44, who is the owner of Fajaa Murudana Sdn Bhd, was alleged to have submitted the Employee Verification Form for the Employee Recruitment Incentive Programme, dated May 12 and 25, and June 4, 2021, containing false information on behalf

of the company to three Socso officials.

He was charged with intending to deceive Socso by giving the names of 34 employees who were actually not employees of Fajaa Murudana.

According to Bernama, Karthikesan was charged with committing the offence at Wisma Perkeso, Jalan Tun Razak here and at Persiaran Perdana, Precinct 2, Putrajaya, between May 19 and Aug 3, 2021.

The charges are framed under Section 18 of

the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) Act 2009 and punishable under Section 24 (2), with jail of up to 20 years and a fine of not less than five times the value of the offence or RM10,000, whichever is higher.

Judge Azura Alwi allowed Karthikesan a bail of RM50,000 with one surety.

He was also ordered to surrender his passport to the court and report himself at the Selangor MACC office.

The court set March 1 for mention.

Deputy public prosecutor from MACC, Mohamad Fadhy Mohd Zamry, prosecuted while lawyer S. Vijaya represented the accused.

Last Jan 13, Karthikesan pleaded not guilty to nine counts of committing a similar offence, involving false claims amounting to more than RM1.4mil.

Penjana Kerjaya is an economic recovery initiative under the Human Resources Ministry introduced in Budget 2021.

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LCS order cut to five units

Sixth supplementary agreement to be signed soon

KUALA LUMPUR: The procurement of the first batch of Littoral Combat Ships (LCS) has been reduced from six to five vessels after the application to continue the project was discussed again by the government, Navy chief Admiral Datuk Abdul Rahman Ayob said.

"Originally, it was six units of LCS, but when we reapplied and discussed the matter again, we agreed to reduce to five.

"The first batch has been set at five (units).

"This decision was made some time ago when the government decided to continue the LCS project (last year)," he said.

He said this after delivering his maiden speech following his appointment as the 18th Royal Malaysian Navy (RMN) chief at Wisma Pertahanan here yesterday, Bernama reported.

Also present were Navy deputy

chief Vice-Admiral Datuk Sabri Zali, Western Fleet Commander Vice-Admiral Datuk Abu Bakar Md Ajis, Eastern Fleet Commander Vice-Admiral Datuk Muhammad Ruzelme Ahmad Fahimy and president of the National Centre for Defence Studies Vice-Admiral Datuk Zulhelmy Ithnain.

Admiral Abdul Rahman said the sixth supplementary agreement on the LCS project would be signed soon to enable the construction to be carried out as planned.

"It is okay now. There is nothing surprising, and we hope we can get these vessels according to schedule (because) we lack high-capacity assets like the LCS.

"The LCS will help us to strengthen (our capability) and carry out our tasks with excellence," he said.

The Navy chief said the procurement of the second batch of Littoral Mission Ships (LMS) would safe-

guard the security and sovereignty of the country's waters.

"We hope the application can be approved this year to enable us to carry out the procurement process, with each vessel taking at least three years to complete.

"This time, we need LMS with combat capability. That's a significant difference from the four LMS we've acquired from China.

"For starters, we requested three units (for the second batch)," he said.

Earlier this month, Defence Minister Datuk Seri Mohamad Hasan said one of the six ships was expected to be ready next year.

He had also said he wanted at least four of the six ships to be completed during his tenure at the ministry.

The multi-billion-ringgit project was signed in 2014, and the ships were supposed to be delivered in

stages beginning 2019.

The Public Accounts Committee (PAC), in its report on Aug 4 last year, said the government had paid RM6.083bil to Boustead Naval Shipyard Sdn Bhd (BNS) in a deal that was allegedly awarded via direct negotiation, but not a single vessel had been delivered.

The PAC also revealed that some RM1.4bil for the project had been diverted for other purposes.

Two reports were subsequently declassified, including the one by the governance, procurement and finance investigation committee, which said the cost of completing the six LCS might balloon to RM11.145bil.

On Aug 17, former Navy chief Tan Sri Ahmad Ramli Mohd Nor, the former managing director of BNS, was charged with three counts of criminal breach of trust involving RM21.08mil over the project.