

Crackdown on protection racket

Syndicate involving JPJ officers who shielded errant lorry drivers busted

By MAZWIN NIK ANIS, IVAN LOH, RSN MURALI and N. TRISHA
newsdesk@thestar.com.my

PUTRAJAYA: A syndicate offering protection to errant lorry drivers has been smashed with the arrest of its members, most of them Road Transport Department (JPJ) officers.

Its modus operandi was similar to a syndicate that was uncovered in Penang two years ago.

However, the latest case had syndicate members who operated in Kedah, Perlis, Perak and Melaka.

The Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) will be casting a wider net to nab other suspects including more JPJ personnel who allegedly accepted bribes to protect lorry operators who committed traffic offences.

The activities of the syndicate, which has been operating since 2019, was put to an end following a special operation codenamed *Ops Sukat*, which saw the arrest of 44 individuals, of which 32 were JPJ officers.

The syndicate was believed to have raked in RM1.64mil in bribes.

MACC chief commissioner Datuk Seri Azam Baki, who confirmed the arrests, said that cooperation in investigating the case came particularly from JPJ's director-general and its integrity division.

"We are still investigating the case and we are not ruling out the possibility of making more arrests in the coming days," he said yesterday.

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JPJ officer facing 660 years in prison

Man pleads not guilty to 33 charges of receiving bribes amounting to RM10,950

By N. TRISHA
trishan@thestar.com.my

BUTTERWORTH: A Road Transport Department (JPJ) officer is facing a total of 660 years of imprisonment if found guilty of 33 charges of bribery.

JPJ assistant enforcement officer Muhammad Faridus Jaafar, 46, claimed trial to the charges at the Sessions Court here yesterday.

Calm and composed as he patiently heard each charge read out to him, he pleaded not guilty to each of the 33 charges of receiving bribes amounting to RM10,950 between 2015 and 2018.

He was charged under the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) Act 2009 which provides for a jail term of up to 20 years, a fine of not less than five times the amount of the bribe or RM10,000, whichever is higher, if



Ongoing case: MACC officers bringing in documents as evidence into the Sessions Court in Butterworth.

found guilty.

During mitigation for bail, his lawyer Ashwinder Kaur said Muhammad Faridus had been working with JPJ for 25 years.

She added that he was the sole breadwinner for his three school-going children and was also looking after his wife, mother and mother-in-law.

Judge Nizam Zakaria set bail at RM20,000 with one surety.

Former Land Public Transport Commission officer Mohd Noor Fadry Noordin, who faces 600 years imprisonment - if convicted - for 30 counts of bribery amounting to RM14,250, was also granted RM20,000 bail after claiming trial.

Seven other JPJ officers were charged with similar offences yesterday.

They are JPJ officers Kadimi Azmi, 35, who is charged with 11 counts of bribery; Khairul Naim Mat Dewa, 34, who is charged with 15 counts of bribery; Faridus Abd Karim, 34, who is charged with 13 counts of bribery; Mohd Faridus Ikhak, 33, who is charged with 15 counts of bribery; M. Aminandy, 45, who is charged with 15 counts of bribery; Muhammad Syukri Isahak, 36, who is charged with 16 counts of bribery; and Noorzalimi Effendi Salleh, 36, who is

charged with 18 counts of bribery. The bribes, totalling more than RM136,000, were received between 2015 and 2018.

Bail was set at RM1,200 per charge for each of the remaining seven officers with one surety each.

All nine were told to surrender their passports to the court and Ju 2 has been set for case management.

Earlier, *The Star* reported that lorry protection racket involving JPJ personnel had been uncovered after the MACC arrested 24 officers in April.

The bribes were inducement, not take action against lorry companies that committed traffic offences which companies and drivers received about JPJ operators.

Those who paid the "protection" money would be given special 2 to display on their windcreens. JPJ officers to identify them.

Marine police successfully cracking down on smugglers

He added that the cases involved the smuggling of cigarettes, liquor and fireworks from all over the country.

last year's RM33.39mil." SAC Mohd Yusoff said after the handover of five amphibian boats at the marine police region II headquarters here

Aman Strategic Source and Technology Department deputy director Senior Asst Comm Detuk Sshahadin Abd Manan said the lat-

"The amphibian boat, which able to operate on both land and sea, has a top speed of 120kph."

Crime and punishment: Flashback to an article in 'The Star' on May 29, 2019, highlighting the trial of an errant JPJ officer charged with receiving bribes.

Sources said investigations revealed that the JPJ officers would deal with lorry operators who had committed road offences, particularly for overloading and not meeting technical conditions stipulated by the department.

"Action would not be taken against errant operators after

money is banked into the officers' private accounts or that of their proxies on a monthly basis.

"Members of the syndicate are believed to have accepted between RM150 and RM3,000 a month. It is estimated that the syndicate members had collected around RM1.64mil over time," said a source.

In 2019, the MACC held a similar operation in Penang that saw dozens of JPJ officers questioned for "protecting" lorry drivers.

The operation resulted in eight officers being charged with multiple counts of bribery. The bribes were inducements not to take action against lorry companies that com-

mitted traffic offences.

The payments were also for tip-offs, which the companies and drivers received to alert them about JPJ operations.

Sources also said those who had paid the "protection" money would be given special logos to display on their windcreens for JPJ personnel to identify them.

Yesterday, three of nine JPJ officers arrested were remanded for four days until Friday following an application by MACC prosecutor S. Selvaranjani before assistant registrar Muhammad Azam Md Eusoff.

In Perak, three of the eight JPJ officers arrested during *Ops Sukat* were remanded for six days, along with two members of the public who acted as proxies.

Perak MACC director Datuk Mohd Fauzi Mohamad said that all five people, aged between 31 and 46, would be remanded until Sunday.

In Melaka, the MACC arrested 11 people, including seven JPJ officers. Ten of them were remanded for a week while another was remanded for five days.

In Kedah, graft-busters arrested eight JPJ officers, one traffic policeman, a former traffic policeman and a member of the public, while in Perlis, one person was arrested in connection with the case.

Watch the video
TheStarTV.com

