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HR Minister's aide arrested in probe

Officer investigated over alleged graft to help obtain foreign worker quotas

By MAZWIN NIK ANIS, RAHIMY RAHIM and IVAN LOH
newsdesk@thestar.com.my

PUTRAJAYA: An aide to Human Resources Minister V. Sivakumar has been arrested over investigations into a case involving the recruitment of foreign workers.

The senior officer was arrested along with a businessman.

More ministry officials, including a senior officer, are expected to be called up as well to have their statements recorded.

The two suspects, aged between 40 and 50, were picked up at the Kuala Lumpur International Airport at around 1am on Wednesday, upon arrival from Bangkok, Thailand.

The suspects were then brought to the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) headquarters here to record their statements.

According to sources, the busi-

nessman was believed to have acted as a runner and bagman for foreign worker agencies to obtain quotas to bring in these workers.

It is also learnt that graft investigators had gone to the aide's office in the early morning of Wednesday and again yesterday to look for documents and other materials for the purpose of investigation.

The two suspects have been remanded for six days until April 17.

MACC chief commissioner Tan Sri Azam Baki confirmed the arrest.

Meanwhile, Sivakumar gave an assurance that he and his ministry would give the authorities their full cooperation.

The Human Resources Minister said that he was well aware of the arrest of one of his officers.

However, since the matter is under MACC investigation, he

said he would not make any more comments on it.

He also urged the media to refrain from making any speculation on the case.

"So, I hope that the media will not speculate or make assumptions that can affect any parties until the probe is completed," he said in a brief statement.

According to a source from the Perak DAP, who declined to be named, the aide who was arrested by the MACC was a former political secretary to Ipoh Barat MP M. Kulasegaran.

"He had worked under Kulasegaran for about two years before being let go," he said.

"We are not even sure if he is still a member of the party," he added.

When contacted, Kulasegaran confirmed that the suspect had once worked under him but declined to comment further.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim had previously said that the government was looking for ways to hire migrant workers without the use of agents that imposed high fees.

As of March 14, the Human Resources Ministry had approved an employment quota of 995,396 foreign workers from various sectors.

Meanwhile in Melaka, an ex-political secretary to the former Melaka chief minister Datuk Seri Idris Haron pleaded not guilty to 12 counts of accepting bribes totalling RM408,736 in 2017 and 2018.

On the first count, Datuk Rosli Hasan, 52, was charged with accepting a bribe of RM323,736 in the form of renovation works on the house belonging to his wife in Taman Pokok Mangga between May 2017 and February 2018.

On the 11 other charges, he was alleged to have accepted bribes in

the form of credit card payments, totalling RM85,000, between May and Oct 19, 2017.

The accused was alleged to have accepted the bribes as an inducement to help a company secure a contract to design and build a mosque, multipurpose hall, shoplots and a garbage dump on Lot 341 and 345, Mukim Bachang, worth RM5.28mil. Bernama reported.

The charge, under Section 16(a) (B) of the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission Act, carries a maximum jail term of 20 years and a fine of RM10,000 or five times the value of the bribes, whichever is higher, if convicted.

Deputy public prosecutor Irwan Shah Abdul Samad prosecuted while Rosli was represented by Azrul Zulkifli Stork.

Sessions Court judge Elesabet Paya Wan set May 16 for next mention.