

NOT GUILTY PLEA

EX-TOURISM MINISTRY AIDE, FIANCEE CHARGED

Both accused implicated in 18 counts of graft involving more than RM3 million

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A FORMER tourism minister's ex-aide was yesterday charged at the Sessions Court with 18 counts of corruption totalling more than RM3 million to help a company win Tourism Malaysia's creative, branding and advertising space tenders.

Mohd Saifullah Mohd Minggu @ Mohd Hisham, 29, pleaded not guilty to the offence before judge Azman Ahmad.

His fiancée, Nurfadziana Abdul Kadir, 28, who sat in the dock with him, also pleaded not guilty

to abetment.

On the first 14 counts, Saifullah had, as the senior private secretary to the tourism, arts and culture minister attached to the ministry, accepted a total of RM2,871,500 from Ronald Seto Kong Seng, 47, the owner of Inter Bev Network Sdn Bhd.

According to the charge sheets, he accepted the monies by promising Kong Seng that he would help secure three Tourism Malaysia's creative, branding and advertising space tenders for the North and East Asia markets, for the company.

On the 15th to 17th counts, the accused was alleged to have solicited RM20,015 and accepted a total of RM25,515 from the same person for the deposit and rental payment for a unit at Vipod Residences in Jalan Kia Peng here.

On the 18th count, Saifullah was accused of accepting RM232,000 from Kong Seng to help the latter obtain the tenders.

He allegedly committed the offences at various locations, in-

cluding the ministry's office in Putrajaya, Vipod Residences and around the city centre between Jan 19 and July 29 last year.

Nurfadziana had abetted Saifullah in accepting RM232,000 from the same person.

All the charges against the couple fall under Section 16(a)(B) of the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) Act 2009, which carries up to 20 years' imprisonment and a fine of no less than five times the amount of gratification or RM10,000, whichever is higher, if convicted.

Deputy public prosecutor Farah Yasmin Salleh did not offer bail to both accused, saying that it was a non-bailable offence.

She added that Saifullah was a flight risk as an MACC investigating officer stated in his affidavit that the anti-graft agency had faced difficulties in tracing the accused during the course of investigations.

"The prosecution's application for bail not to be granted is based on this affidavit, which states that efforts had been made by



Mohd Saifullah Mohd Minggu @ Mohd Hisham and his fiancée, Nurfadziana Abdul Kadir (right), arriving at the Sessions Court in Kuala Lumpur yesterday. BERNAMA PIC

MACC to trace the accused. Based on this, there is a high possibility that the accused would abscond and not cooperate with the court.

"The prosecution objects to any bail to be granted to both of them."

Lawyer Md Yunos Shariff, who represented both the accused, argued that there was nowhere in the affidavit stating MACC's failure to track down Saifullah.

He said Saifullah had surrendered himself at the MACC office the minute he knew that he was needed for the investigation into the case.

"It is stated in the affidavit that

my client had surrendered to MACC on Aug 14 and the affidavit did not state that my client was avoiding or had run away from the commission," Yunos said in pleading for bail to be allowed.

Azman then allowed RM200,000 bail with one surety for Saifullah and ordered him to surrender his passport to the court and report to the MACC office on the first week of each month until the disposal of the case.

The judge allowed Nurfadziana RM100,000 bail and imposed the same conditions on her.

Their case will be up for mention on Sept 23.