

PRESS RELEASE

RELEASE DATE: 5TH AUGUST 2023



MALAYSIAN FREELANCE RUNNER IMPRISONED AND FINED FOR CORRUPTION AND SMUGGLING

BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN, Saturday, 5th August 2023 – The Magistrates Court Bandar Seri Begawan today sentenced a Malaysian national to 12 months imprisonment and a fine of B\$ 211,610 or serve 25 months imprisonment in default for offences contrary to the Prevention of Corruption Act, Chapter 131 and the Excise Order, 2006. On 2nd August 2023, the Defendant, Eric Wong See Heng, 25, has pleaded guilty to corruptly offering gratification of B\$1,000 or B\$2,000 to a Narcotics Officer to refrain from taking any action for the discovery of contraband items namely 266 pieces of vape and vape items in his car at Sungai Tujoh Control Post on 27th July 2023.

The Defendant is a freelance runner delivering vape and vape related items from Miri, Sarawak, to Brunei Darussalam. On 27th July 2023, he had driven from Miri into Brunei Darussalam through the Sungai Tujoh Control Post, Kuala Belait. Whilst at the said control post, having completed the immigration check, the Defendant was ordered to park aside for a routine inspection by a Narcotics Control Officer to be carried out on his vehicle.

During the inspection, there were several taped brown boxes found inside the Defendant's vehicle. Upon inquiry, the Defendant stated that they were electrical items belonging to his mother. The said boxes were then brought to the x-ray room for further inspection.

Upon seeing the discovery of the contraband items, the Defendant then corruptly offered the said narcotics officer by uttering the following words to him – *“boleh minta tolong kah? Lepaskah apa? Kasi angpaw 1000 atau 2000 (“Can you help me? To release me or what? Give angpaw 1000 to 2000”)*, and then patted his left trouser pocket.

The Anti-Corruption Bureau (“ACB”) was informed by the Narcotics Control Bureau (“NCB”) of the abovementioned incident on the same day. The ACB thereafter investigated the Defendant for the incident where he corruptly offered monies to the said narcotics officer, whom is an agent acting in relation to his principal’s affairs as a public body, being the NCB. During the course of investigations, it was discovered that the Defendant had made such offer in order to be let go for smuggling large quantities of contraband items namely vape and vape items, into Brunei Darussalam, which he knew then to be illegal.

The Defendant was thereafter handed over to the Royal Customs and Excise Department (“RCED”) for investigations to be conducted in respect of 266 vape and vape related items found in his vehicle. It was revealed that the total excise duty evaded for the said items is BND\$ 21,161.00.

During investigations, it was discovered that the Defendant had loaded all the boxes containing the vapes and vape-related items, which he had picked up from various shops in Miri, Sarawak, into his vehicle in order to deliver to customers in Brunei Darussalam. It was further discovered that the Defendant would receive a fee for his delivery services and admitted to having delivered vape and vape-related items to Bruneian customers over the last five to six months. On average, the Defendant received \$1,600 to \$2000 for his services. During the investigation, RCED officers also found a sum of monies, comprising of various currencies inside the Defendant’s bag.

As the Defendant indicated that was unable to pay the fine, the Court ordered for the Defendant to serve the imprisonment sentence consecutively, rendering a total of 37 months imprisonment.

The Honourable Magistrate Syaffina binti Shahif presided over the case while Prosecuting Officer Khalillah binti Hussin appeared on behalf of the Public Prosecutor.