

PROBE REVEALS 20 BORROWERS

POLICE NAB 2 LOAN SHARKS

Arrests uncover syndicate with ties to northern region

AUDREY DERMAWAN
BALIK PULAU
audreymd@nst.com.my

POLICE detained two syndicate members of an unlicensed moneylender offering non-existent loans during a raid at a house in Taman Kemuning, Kulim in Kedah on Tuesday.

Southwest district police chief Superintendent A.A. Anbalagan said the raid was part of Op Vulture, after police received a report from a businessman who claimed to have been threatened by the syndicate if he refused to settle his loan, when in fact he had done so.

"The victim said he had borrowed RM30,000 from the syndicate in 2019 after he saw an advertisement on Facebook. However, he only received RM24,900 through a bank transfer while the rest, the syndicate claimed, were processing fees.

"After a year, the businessman had paid RM31,700. On Nov 3, the businessman could not settle his loan on time and had contacted the syndicate to discuss the balance. The syndicate agreed that the businessman pay a sum of RM9,000 to settle the loan.

"After doing so, the syndicate continued to harass the businessman, threatening him and his family if he didn't pay more," he said at a press conference yesterday.

Anbalagan said following the report, police launched the operation and detained two men, aged 20 and 24, on Tuesday afternoon.

Their arrests led to the police uncovering the syndicate's activities, which conned people by charging exorbitant interest rates and non-existent loans.

Following the duo's arrest, police seized three mobile phones, 20 copies of identification documents, believed to be those of victims, company documents, loan documents, debit cards, cheques and bank documents, as well as photographs of borrowers.

"Based on investigations, the syndicate will post the photographs of borrowers who failed to pay up on social media, as well as distribute their photographs and posters in their neighbourhood, with the aim of shaming them until they pay up."

Anbalagan said the syndicate had been in operation for more than four years and targeted businesses facing financial difficulties during the Covid-19 pandemic.

"The syndicate is believed to have networks in the northern region and is able to offer loans of up to tens of thousands of ringgit.

"Based on further investigations, at least 20 people have borrowed money from the syndicate. We are still conducting investigations into the mastermind and other syndicate members."

Anbalagan said one of the men detained had four previous records for criminal activities.

Both were under remand for further investigations under Section 5(2) of the Moneylenders Act 1951.



The effective capacity of the Teluk Bahang Dam, at 56.7 per cent, can last for only 170 days without rainfall. BERNAMA PIC

INSUFFICIENT RAINFALL

Penang water authority posts first shortage alert

GEORGE TOWN: The Penang Water Supply Corporation (PBAPP) has issued a first alert of a looming water shortage in the state due to insufficient rainfall since the beginning of this year.

PBAPP chief executive officer Datuk Jaseni Maidinsa said the rainfall for this year was the lowest compared with the last four years, with no rainfall recorded last month.

He said the effective capacity of the Air Itam Dam, at 77.3 per cent, could last for only 75 days, while the effective capacity of the Teluk Bahang Dam, at 56.7 per cent, could last for only 170 days without rainfall.

"We need our dams' effective capacity to last until August, when the rain arrives in September, although next month we will have some rain due to the inter-monsoon season.

"In the meantime, we advise consumers to use water wisely during this dry season.

"We will also recommend to the state government to conduct cloud-seeding operations, just like last year, to achieve a minimum of 80 per cent effective capacities in the Air Itam and Teluk Bahang Dams by the end of the year," he said during a visit to the Air Itam Dam yesterday.

The effective capacity of the Air Itam Dam yesterday was 77.3 per cent, compared with 95.2 per cent on Jan 1, a drop of 17.9 per cent.

The effective capacity of the Teluk Bahang Dam yesterday was 56.7 per cent, compared with 58.7 per cent, a drop of two per cent.

The rainfall at the Air Itam Dam area between Jan 1 and Jan 11 this year was 123mm, compared with 315.3mm on average during the corresponding period between 2017 and 2020, a drop of 61 per cent.

The rainfall at the Teluk Bahang Dam area between Jan 1 and Jan 11 this year was 53.5mm, compared with 555.5mm on average during the corresponding period between 2017 and 2020, a drop of 90.4 per cent.

Last year, the Air Itam Dam recorded the lowest effective capacity of 31.4 per cent on Oct 2, while the Teluk Bahang Dam recorded the lowest effective capacity of 16 per cent on Sept 5.

The state conducted 15 cloud-seeding operations last year at a cost of RM450,000.

PBAPP, Jaseni said, had implemented several dry weather control measures to sustain the storage capacities of the two dams, which included monitoring dam capacities in Penang and Kedah,

as well as the Sungai Muda water levels, on a daily basis.

"This is because more than 80 per cent of our raw water supply comes from Sungai Muda.

"PBAPP is also optimising daily drawdowns from both dams while maximising water abstraction from Sungai Muda at the Lahar Tiang Intake and pumping the raw water to the Sungai Muda Water Treatment Plant for treated water production.

"We are also optimising water production from the Sungai Dua Water Treatment Plant (Penang's largest water treatment plant) in Seberang Prai and pumping treated water from the plant to Penang island, via submarine pipelines, to ensure water supply sufficiency.

"Lastly, we are also drawing down raw water from the Mengkuang Dam in Seberang Prai to support water production at the Sungai Dua Water Treatment Plant as necessary.

"The effective capacity of the Mengkuang Dam was 94.9 per cent yesterday," he said, adding that Penang was the only state in Malaysia to have a strategic dam.

Both the Air Itam and Teluk Bahang Dams are daily dams.

BURIAL POSTPONED

Kelantan accident victim died due to injuries, not heart attack

KOTA BARU: The 51-year-old accident victim, whose burial was postponed due to an error in the post-mortem result, died from serious injuries and not a heart attack, as reported in a Malay newspaper recently.

The Kelantan Health Department, in a statement, said the actual cause of the man's death as stated in the burial permit was

due to "polytrauma" following a road accident.

"The victim was involved in a road crash on March 9 and was immediately brought to a nearby hospital.

"He suffered serious injuries and died while receiving treatment.

"The health officer ordered the body to be brought back to the

hospital after realising that no police report was lodged before the burial permit was issued and later allowed the family to bring the body back home again.

"However, police issued another directive for the family to bring back the body to the hospital for a post-mortem," the statement said.

It stated that the state health

department took the issue seriously and a special internal investigation committee had been set up to investigate the incident.

It was reported that the remains of the accident victim, which was supposed to be buried on Tuesday morning, had to be postponed due to an error in the post-mortem report.

The deceased, Che Azhar Che

Lah, who was involved in an accident on Monday night, was scheduled for burial in his hometown of Kampung Pak Badol on Wednesday, but had to be postponed for several hours due to the error.

Based on the earlier hospital report, it was stated that the deceased died of a heart attack with no mention of the accident.