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FSFM leader Nor Azami, trustees charged

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KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. - Federal Special Forces of Malaysia leader Nor Azami Ghazali and two members of its board of trustees were jointly charged in the Sessions Court today with two counts of conspiring to cheat the public into joining the organisation.

Nor Azami, 35, who is named as the third accused, and two others - Science, Technology and Environment Ministry human resources director Abdul Rahman Baba, 55, and businessman Tengku Hamid Tengku Ismail, 70, - pleaded not guilty.

Abdul Rahman and Tengku Hamid also pleaded not guilty to a third charge of forging an Emergency Action Team of Malaysia letter dated Oct 17 last year with intention to cheat.

Judge Mohd Zaki Abdul Wahab allowed them to be released on RM20,000 bail in two sureties each, and allowed Abdul Rahman and Tengku Hamid RM10,000 bail in one surety each for the third charge.

They will be jointly tried on the first two charges from Jan 26 to 30 and Feb 3 to 6.

Nor Azami, who wore a black suit, was handcuffed to Tengku Hamid, who was in turn handcuffed to Abdul Rahman when they were brought to the courtroom.

He waved to his relatives in the packed courtroom.

On the first charge, the trio are alleged to have committed criminal conspiracy by cheating the public into believing that they were recruiting members for EATM, which is a registered body, when they were actually recruiting for another organisation set up and headed by them.

They allegedly committed the offence at No 07-1926, Jalan Besar, Taman Bukit Angkasa, Pantai Hill Park, Kuala Lumpur, between Sept 19, last year and June 21.

They also pleaded not guilty to the second charge of committing criminal conspiracy to lead the public into believing that FSFM was an organisation registered with the Prime Minister's Department.

This offence was allegedly committed at the same place, between May 8 and July 16.

Both offences under Section 417 of the Penal Code are punishable with a minimum of two years' jail.

Abdul Rahman and Tengku Hamid faced a third charge of forging an EATM letter dated Oct 17, last year, with intention to cheat, at the Science, Technology and Environment Ministry, Level 3, Block C5, Federal Government Administrative Centre, Putrajaya, on Oct 17, last year.

This offence under Section 465 of the Penal Code is punishable with a maximum of two years' jail or a fine or both.

Deputy public prosecutor Datuk Abdul Rahman Putra Taha, assisted by DPPs Dzul kifli Ahmad and Nik Suhaimi Nik Sulaiman, suggested that the accused be released on RM40,000 bail in two sureties each for the first two charges.

Karpal Singh, counsel for Nor Azami, said the amount suggested was too high and applied for it to be reduced to RM20,000, saying that the offences wereailable.

Counsel Md Yunos Shariff, who represented Abdul Rahman Baba and Tengku Hamid, said the proposed bail amount was excessive and did not reflect the intention of granting bail which was only to secure the attendance of the accused in court.

He applied for the bail to be reduced to RM15,000, saying that Abdul Rahman Baba, was a government servant who had five children, four of whom were still schooling, and that his wife was also a government servant.

Md Yunos was assisted by counsel Saiful Izham Ramli and Muhamad Burok.

Earlier, Karpal made an application for the court to issue a show-cause notice to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi why they should not be committed for contempt of court for making statements about the case when investigations were under way.

He said their statements were subjudice.

Mohd Zaki, however, said that today's proceedings were not appropriate for such an application and told Karpal to file the application together with an affidavit to support it.

Mohd Zaki also raised the issue of jurisdiction and said he was doubtful whether he could hear the third charge as it stated that the offence was committed in Putrajaya.

"I raise this issue because I don't want arguments about this after the case is over," he said.

He then fixed Aug 20 to hear submissions on the matter.

At 4.30pm only Nor Azami had posted bail.