

Justo to plead guilty for blackmail charge
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Former PetroSaudi International executive Xavier Andre Justo, who is facing charges for blackmailing his former employer, will be pleading guilty, confirmed his lawyer.

Singapore's The Straits Times had quoted Geneva-based lawyer Marc Henzelin as saying so.

"He is pleading guilty, so there will not be a full hearing with witnesses, because the verdict is already done," Henzelin said over the phone from Geneva.

"There will be a hearing which will theoretically take place next week. It is understood from the police that it should take place next week but it may be 10 days. He will be sentenced straight away.

"The fact that he pleads guilty will be a mitigating circumstance. The fact that he collaborated with the police and made confessions will be taken into consideration by the judge. This has to be pleaded by the Thai lawyer and I'm sure he will," Henzelin said.

The lawyer said he was told that the sentence could range from six months to one-and-a-half years. Under the terms of a treaty between Thailand and Switzerland, if Justo has less than a year to serve, he could be transferred to do the time in Switzerland.

But if he had to serve it in Thailand he would accept that, added Henzelin.

Justo was not paid the RM8 million

Justo was arrested by Thai police at his house in Koh Samui on June 22.

He had then signed a full confession and, in an interview on July 23 with The Straits Times in jail, detailed how he had met a group of buyers in Bangkok and Singapore to sell them the data.

He claimed he was not paid the RM8 million agreed for the transaction.

On July 24, The Edge Media Group's chairperson Tong Kooi Ong (photo) and publisher Ho Kay Tat confirmed they had agreed to buy the data and had not paid him.

The Swiss national had also named Clare Rewcastle-Brown, the Britain-based publisher of the Sarawak Report, as the third person involved in the transaction.