

# Professor claims trial to 21 false claims charges

Published on: Thursday, July 21, 2022

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*Charles (left) with counsel Zahir after the proceedings: Released on a bail of RM20,000, with RM10,000 deposited with a local surety.*

**KOTA KINABALU:** A university professor was charged Wednesday with 21 counts of making false claims totalling RM66,190 for research funds related to Sabah's marine life. Prof Dr Charles Santhanaraju Vairappan, 55, of University Malaysia Sabah's (UMS) Faculty of Natural Products Chemistry, Institute for Topical Biology and Conservation, pleaded not guilty to all the charges before Sessions Court Judge Abu Bakar Manat. He was accused of submitting the expenses claim documents which were official receipts that contained false details to the agents at Jabatan Bendahari UMS between May 2014 and April 2017.

The charges stated that the receipts were payments for diving activities, boat charter to several islands in the State and van charter, but actually all the activities were not done. The offence, under Section 18 of the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) Act, provides for a maximum 20 years' jail and a fine five times the amount involved or RM10,000, whichever is higher, upon conviction. The court fixed Sept 6 for case management and released Charles on a bail of RM20,000, with RM10,000 deposited with a local surety. Charles, from Penang, was also ordered to report to the MACC office once in two months as well as his passport, if any, to be impounded by the court.

The court also warned Charles to not tamper with the prosecution witnesses. Earlier, Deputy Public Prosecutor Nartiah F. Mirchelle Sambatan offered bail of RM20,000 with a local surety on the grounds that Charles has 21 charges against him. She also asked the court to impose additional conditions, namely to submit his international passport to court, report to the MACC office twice a month and not tamper with the prosecution witnesses pending the disposal of the case. However, counsel Zahir Shah who together with counsel Baldev Singh, representing Charles, applied for the bail sum to be reduced, saying his client is not a flight risk as he has been as a lecturer in UMS since 2013 until now.