

Money laundering case reaches Supreme Court

- By Richard M. Nanua
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The first money laundering case that ripped off ANZ Bank customers huge money in 2015 has been committed in Supreme Court on August 29, 2017.

Charles Sumbe and Maipeza Kalsaria are now facing multiple counts of money laundering and theft and are due to stand trial for plea in Supreme Court on September 11.

Kalsaria is facing four counts of money laundering while Mr Sumbe was due to answer 25 counts – a breakdown of the charges, Sumbe will plead to a total of 17 counts of money laundering with eight additional counts of theft.

It was alleged by the prosecution that the around Vt700,000 up to Vt800,000 was stolen from customer's account.

Section 11 of the Proceeds of Crime Act (CAP 284) targets money laundering.

Section 11 states;

“Money laundering;

“(3) A person engages in money laundering only if:

(a) the person engages, directly or indirectly, in a transaction that involves money, or other property, that the person knows, or ought reasonably to know, to be proceeds of crime.”

During the committal this week, Prosecutor Philip Toaliu said that those cases have massively contributed to Vanuatu in its current standing in the world's grey list and if

such cases are not taken seriously, the country might be moved into the blacklist in the upcoming meeting in Bangkok, Thailand.

Mr Toaliu said that someone who claimed to be Drake Stephen Keith anonymously connected with Kalsaria and Sumbe claiming he is the director of human resource department of a furniture company called Lina Interior Company that is based in England.

During the Preliminary Inquiry (PI), prosecution said that Keith liaised on Facebook with Mr Sumbe and Kalsaria separately claiming his company has customers in Vanuatu and they need agents to collect money and send them overseas via Western Union.

The prosecution continued that Keith claimed that bank transactions have so many surcharges so he prefers the money to be sent on Western Union.

The Court was told that Sumbe and Kalsaria never met each other before.

Prosecution alleged that Keith asked the two to open bank accounts in ANZ and then he allegedly hacked the customers' personal accounts and shifted the money to Kalsaria and Sumbe's account before they withdrew the money and sent them to him.

He said that they were receiving 10 percent out of each transaction.

Investigations revealed that the money was sent to Malaysia instead of England as initially claimed.

The Court was further told that there were two others who were involved in the same issue and they are Steve Bani and Nishai Tasavaka Marango.

But they still have their case pending before the Magistrates Court for PI.

Mrs Marango will have her case tested for evidence on September 12 while Bani will be dealt with on Santo in days to come.

The case involving Bani and Marango had been withdrawn before and but the prosecution is trying to revive it.

Magistrate Trevor Naieu said that the prosecution needs to provide the case dismissal order before it will be reinstated for hearing.

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