

## **'No, Taib Mahmud is not richest man in Malaysia'**

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Former Sarawak chief minister's son Mahmud Abu Bekir Taib denied today that his father, Abdul Taib Mahmud, is the richest person in Malaysia.

Testifying during his examination-in-chief by his lawyer Zainur Rijal Abu Bakar in the Kuala Lumpur Syariah High Court, Abu Bekir (right) also denied that he had acted violently against his former wife, Shahnaz Abdul Majid.

“All the allegations she made are out of anger and these are all false and empty allegations. This includes the allegation that my father is the richest man in Malaysia. This is illogical,” he said on the witness stand.

Abu Bekir, 50, said he has never hit Shahnaz and described himself as a very shy person.

“I deny her description in the statement of claim (for mutaah, gift following divorce) that I was violent and short tempered,” he said.

Shahnaz (right) is seeking RM100 million in mutaah (gift) following their divorce.

In fact, Abu Bekir claimed, that it was Shahnaz who acted violently against him, as she would sometimes try to scratch his face in some disputes.

However, the witness said, he would stop his wife from doing so and would push her to the floor but he denied being violent with her.

Abu Bekir also said he had also cared for their only child and refuted claims that he did not support Shahnaz on this.

“I asked her to inform me how much are his tuition fees for our son's study in the United Kingdom, but she did not furnish her details. As a result, she is claiming child matrimonial claim from me. All her claims that I do not care for our son are baseless,” he said.

He also said he purchased a watch for Shahnaz that cost between RM80,000 and RM150,000 and bought her countless items of jewellery, worth hundreds of thousands of ringgit.

“It is something (jewellery) she likes a lot,” Abu Bekir said, adding that he paid Shahnaz RM10,000 or more following their separation and this continued six months after their divorce. He also bought a house in Damansara, at a cost of RM1.5 million, which is placed under Shahnaz's name and he paid the loan.

The couple was divorced on March 11, 2011.

'No billion ringgit transactions'

Abu Bekir also denied that he has engaged in billions of ringgit worth of transactions in his companies and said the worth could be just millions of ringgit.

He also denied owning some of the companies listed in Shahnaz's mutaah statement of claim.

Some of the companies that Abu Bekir claimed he does not own include Radiant Lagdon, Essential Straits and Celerity Design.

"For example, the document (statement of claim) described me as the executive chairperson of Cahya Mata Sarawak. This is wrong as I am only the deputy chairperson."

He also denied the testimony by Shahnaz's hired accountant, who valued the land he owns as worth hundreds of millions ringgit.

Abu Bekir also refuted claims that the land is planted with oil palm trees as claimed.

"The accountant had not visited the land. It is not filled with palm oil plantations but shrubs or bushes. How do you value bushes or shrubs?" he asked.

Abu Bekir explained further how he obtained some of the lands where his companies are involved in government projects, such as building bridges.

"The state government does not have ample funds to pay back for the construction of the bridges so it awards the land as payment," he said, adding that he has to pay his contractors and suppliers for the construction.

Abu Bekir said he accepted the lands as payment in kind but acknowledged that some of the properties have been sold off, as he had to pay the contractors and suppliers for the construction of the projects.

The hearing before Kuala Lumpur Syariah High Court judge Muhamad Abdul Karim Wahab continues on Sept 8.

Shahnaz is represented by Akbardin Abdul Kadir and Rafie Mohd Shafie.