

'Najib told me talking points on 1MDB audit report would be provided'

Malaysiakini

24 August 2020

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AUDIT TAMPERING TRIAL | Najib Abdul Razak allegedly told then chief secretary to the government Ali Hamsa that talking points would be provided on resolving potentially controversial issues in the 1MDB audit report, the Kuala Lumpur High Court heard today.

Ali (above) testified that then prime minister Najib informed him of this during a meeting at the Prime Minister's Office in Putrajaya on Feb 22, 2016.

The said meeting took place just two days before a crucial meeting on Feb 24, 2016, at which a decision was made to drop several potentially controversial issues from the 1MDB audit report.

Among those present during the Feb 24 meeting were Ali, then auditor-general Ambrin Buang, then officer from Attorney-General's Chambers Dzulkifli Ahmad (who would later head the MACC), and Najib's then principal private secretary

Shukry Mohd Salleh.

Ali was testifying as the fourth prosecution witness today during the 1MDB audit report tampering trial against Najib and former 1MDB CEO Arul Kanda Kandasamy.

During cross-examination by Najib's lead defence counsel Muhammad Shafee Abdullah, Ali said the accused on Feb 22, 2016, had informed him about the talking points, which would be provided by the Prime Minister's Office (PMO).

Ali said the talking points were to guide him when he coordinates the meeting on Feb 24, 2016, to discuss the potentially controversial issues in the 1MDB audit report, such as 1MDB's two conflicting financial statements for 2014.

Shafee: Your involvement was to coordinate the meeting (on Feb 24, 2016) to resolve some controversial aspect of the (1MDB) audit report?

Ali: Yes.

Shafee: Do you have the talking points?

Ali: I do not have it now.

Shafee: Who gave the talking points?

Ali: According to my special officer, it was from the PMO. Who from PMO prepared it, I do not know.

Shafee: Were you contacted or spoken to on the talking points?

Ali: I was informed by then prime minister (Najib) that the talking points would be provided.

Ali then explained that the talking points are in relation to the Feb 24, 2016, meeting.

Shafee: It is unlikely that the talking points were prepared by the prime minister (Najib himself)?

Ali: (It is) Unlikely.

When Shafee asked whether the talking points contained directions to Ali in how to prepare the finalisation of the audit report, the witness denied there was any such direction.

In regard to whether the talking points seemed to contain anything inappropriate, Ali testified that based on his interpretation of the talking points, it merely gave points on the issues of contention to be raised regarding the 1MDB audit report during the meeting on Feb 24, 2016.

Shafee: You only raised the points of contention (during the Feb 24, 2016 meeting), but the decision you left to the (then) auditor-general (Ambrin Buang)?

Ali: Yes.

When Shafee asked what happened to the talking points, Ali said that when the Feb 24, 2016 meeting was concluded, the witness had directed for the talking points to be disposed of.

However, the testimony was not clear on who was asked to dispose of the said talking points.

In regard to how the Feb 24, 2016 meeting ended, Ali reiterated that it ended on a jovial mood and that Ambrin (photo) seemed to be his usual normal self.

Ali testified that even when he escorted Ambrin to the door to exit the meeting, Ambrin still looked normal.

He was replying to a question by Shafee in relation to previous testimony in court that Ambrin seemed to look upset after the meeting.

On Nov 21 last year, National Audit Department (NAD) officer Nor Salwani Muhammad testified that Ambrin looked upset immediately after the meeting on Feb 24, 2016.

During re-examination by lead DPP Gopal Sri Ram today, Ali also agreed that had it not been for the Feb 22, 2016 meeting, then the other meeting on Feb 24, 2016, would not have taken place.

Judge Mohamed Zaini Mazlan then allowed proceedings to adjourn this afternoon. The trial will resume tomorrow morning.

Najib is charged with using his position to order amendments to the 1MDB audit report before it was presented to the PAC to avoid any action being taken against him.

Co-accused Arul Kanda is charged with abetting Najib in making the amendments to the report.

Both of them were charged under Section 23(1) of the MACC Act 2009, which

specifies a jail term not exceeding 20 years, and a fine of no less than five times the amount of gratification or RM10,000, whichever is higher.

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