

## **1MDB corruption trial postponed, Najib in Covid-19 quarantine**

**Malaysiakini**

**05 October 2020**

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1MDB TRIAL | Former prime minister Najib Abdul Razak's RM2.28 billion 1MDB corruption trial today has been postponed following his voluntary Covid-19 quarantine.

The High Court in Kuala Lumpur allowed the postponement application by the accused's defence counsel Muhammad Shafee Abdullah during open court proceedings this morning. Najib was not present in court today.

The postponement of Najib's RM2.28 billion graft trial is similar to that of former deputy prime minister Ahmad Zahid Hamidi's corruption trial.

Both Zahid and Najib had campaigned in the recently concluded Sabah state election. Sabah has since seen an uptick in Covid-19 cases.

Several politicians who took part in the polls have since tested positive for Covid-

19, including BN's Pitas candidate Sufian Abd Karim and Umno information chief Shahril Hadan.

Lead defence counsel Muhammad Shafee Abdullah said Najib is currently undergoing self-imposed quarantine at his home, from Sept 28 until Oct 12.

"When I asked my client if he (Najib) was exposed to any person he knew who tested positive (later), he said 'yes' but he does not know to what extent.

"He has taken the responsible way of testing himself on Sept 27 in Sabah before taking the flight (back to Peninsula Malaysia).

"In this test at Pantai Hospital in Sabah, the lab report for Covid-19 came back as negative," he said.

Shafee said that his client was guided by the advice given by Defence Minister Ismail Sabri Yaakob who said that even if one tested negative for Covid-19, it is still better for one to go for a 14-day self-imposed quarantine following such testing.

He said Najib wished to avoid a similar situation as a minister who was heavily criticised for not adhering to self-imposed quarantine as part of anti-Covid-19

measures.

DPP Mohamad Mustaffa P Kuninglam informed the court that the prosecution would leave it to judge Collin Lawrence Sequerah to decide over the matter.

The judge allowed the defendant's application to vacate trial dates not only for today but also from Tuesday to Thursday this week. The trial will resume on Oct 19.

"In light of the Covid-19 situation, it is a bit of a risk. It could be much ado over nothing, but then even on the 13th day, symptoms (of Covid-19 positivity) could manifest," Sequerah said.

"In light of the circumstances, I accede to the request. The trial is vacated from Monday (today) to Thursday (this week)," the judge said.

Najib is on trial over four counts of abuse of power and 21 counts of money laundering involving RM2.28 billion of 1MDB's funds.

Aside from being the prime minister then, the accused was also the finance minister and chairperson of the board of advisors of 1MDB at the time.

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