

Rosmah's lawyers elect not to call Najib as defence witness

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Najib Abdul Razak will not be taking the stand as a defence witness in his wife Rosmah Mansor's corruption trial linked to the RM1.25 billion solar hybrid energy project.

Her defence counsel Jagjit Singh informed the Kuala Lumpur High Court this morning that they decided yesterday as the former prime minister's testimony would merely be "corroborative" in nature.

It was previously reported that Rosmah's lawyers initially sought to call her husband Najib to testify in the defence stage of her corruption trial linked to the project for 369 rural schools in Sarawak.

During open-court proceedings before trial judge Mohamed Zaini Mazlan, Jagjit said that the defence elected not to call Najib as other witnesses' testimony in past proceedings had already corroborated certain issues linked to the case.

“Today, the defence was scheduled to call DW3 (Defence Witness 3) Najib Abdul Razak.

“However, after a brainstorming session on Saturday to late hours Sunday (yesterday), the defence has elected not to call Najib Abdul Razak as the third (defence) witness, as his evidence is primarily corroborative in nature.

“We believe the corroborative nature of his evidence has already been established by the defence.

“For this reason, we restructured and made the decision that we do not intend to call him (Najib). I sincerely apologise to your lordship about the decision,” Jagjit said.

The defence lawyer then applied for the court to vacate the solar graft trial dates for not only today but also tomorrow, Thursday and Friday this week.

Jagjit said this is because their witness, Siti Azizah Sheikh Abod, is currently performing umrah (in Saudi Arabia) and would only be available on Feb 4.

Siti Azizah used to be the coordinator of the First Lady of Malaysia Division under the Prime Minister’s Office (PMO).

Rosmah not overbearing

Deputy public prosecutor Gopal Sri Ram then informed the court that the prosecution has no objection, as it is the prerogative of the defence on who to call as the defence witness.

Zaini then vacated the trial today as well as tomorrow, Thursday and Friday this week and directed for proceedings to resume on Feb 4.

On that date, the prosecution is expected to begin the cross-examination of Siti Azizah, who previously testified among others that civil servants did not perceive Rosmah as overbearing.

The prosecution claimed Rosmah possessed an overbearing nature that allowed her to exercise considerable influence in the public sector despite occupying no official position.

The prosecution contended that this allowed the accused to purportedly solicit and receive bribes linked to the project.

Rosmah was in the dock, while her husband Najib was not seen in court this morning.

In relation to the trial before the Kuala Lumpur High Court, Rosmah, 70, is facing three charges under Section 16(a)(A) of the MACC Act 2009.

In the first charge, she is accused of soliciting RM187.5 million in bribes from Jepak Holdings Sdn Bhd to help secure a RM1.25 billion Education Ministry project.

Supply power to schools

The project was intended to supply power to 369 rural schools in Sarawak using a combination of solar and diesel energy.

In the second and third charges, she is accused of receiving RM1.5 million and RM5 million in bribes, respectively, as a reward for securing the project.

If found guilty, Rosmah faces up to 20 years in prison and a fine of five times the value of the gratification received.

On Feb 18 this year, the High Court ordered Rosmah to enter her defence, following its finding that the prosecution succeeded in establishing a prima facie case against her.

Today is part of the defence stage of the trial.

Najib, who served as the prime minister from 2009 to 2018, is also facing a slew of corruption charges.

He has been convicted of money laundering, criminal breach of trust and abuse of power over the misappropriation of funds belonging to SRC International Sdn Bhd, a former subsidiary of 1MDB.

Najib was sentenced to 12 years imprisonment and an RM210 million fine but is presently free pending a final appeal to the Federal Court.

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