

Najib issued RM779,000 in cheques, court told

'Money meant to influence online news narratives to favour ex-PM'

PETALING JAYA: Almost RM779,000 in cheques were issued from former prime minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak's bank account in early 2015, the High Court heard yesterday.

Witnesses in the money-laundering and criminal breach of trust trial over RM42 million of funds from SRC International Sdn Bhd said the amount was to fund efforts to understand online news narratives and influence them to favour Najib and his administration

The Centre for Strategic Engagement Sdn Bhd (Cense) said it was paid RM150,000 a month to monitor six major local Chinese newspapers to identify issues affecting the Chinese community. The six Chinese newspapers named were *Sin Chew Daily*, *Nanyang Siang Pau*, *Kwong Wah Jit Poh*, *China Press*, *Guang Ming Daily* and *Oriental Daily News*.

Cense director Rita Sim, 59, said the company received a total of RM300,000 in payment for services rendered for December 2014 and January 2015 through a cheque banked into the company's account at RHB Bank in Bangsar.

A former political secretary of Najib testified that he helped get influential businessman, Lim Soon Peng, to pay off the administrators of the Facebook group "Ah Jib Gor". It was tasked to influence online Chinese users and garner support from them.

Wong Nai Chee testified that an online website, Chinese Weekly, also received



NAJIB'S SRC TRIAL

THE CHARGES

Seven charges of CBT, abuse of power and money laundering involving RM42 million belonging to SRC International Sdn Bhd, a subsidiary of 1MDB.



THE JUDGE

Justice
**Mohd Nazlan
Mohd Ghazali**

THE PENALTY

Jail term of up to
**20 years,
fine or whipping.**

THE PROSECUTION TEAM

Led by **Tommy Thomas**
(Attorney-General)



THE DEFENCE TEAM

Led by **Tan Sri Muhammad Shafee Abdullah**
(lead counsel)



money for the same purpose. Both outfits received RM238,914.

Hafiz Ghazi, a Johor Umno politician and great-grandson of Datuk Onn Jaafar, also testified to receiving RM240,000 to fund Malaysian Digest, an "alternative" news website that promoted government policies of Barisan Nasional.

Earlier yesterday, the Court of Appeal in Putrajaya reserved judgment in the appeal by Najib to have former Federal Court judge Datuk Seri Gopal Sri Ram removed as the lead prosecutor in Najib's 1Malaysia Development Bhd cases.

A three-member panel, comprising Justices Datuk Zabariah Mohd Yusof, Datuk

Rhodzariah Bujang and Datuk Lau Bee Lan, reserved judgment after hearing submissions from the prosecution and defence.

Najib had appealed against the decision of High Court Judge Collin Lawrence Sequerah who, on March 1, dismissed his application to disqualify Sri Ram as the senior deputy public prosecutor.

Sequerah found no evidence to show that Sri Ram will be biased in handling the case. He also held that Najib had no right to demand Sri Ram's letter of appointment.

The judge had also dismissed Najib's application to temporarily suspend the trial which is scheduled to commence on May 14, pending disposal of the appeal.