

Witnesses asked 'were you charged?'

It was deemed an important question for Najib's lead counsel Shafee

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KUALA LUMPUR: For witnesses of the 1Malaysia Development Bhd (1MDB) trial who have received funds allegedly linked to the scandal, Datuk Seri Najib Razak's lead counsel would surely ask them "Were you charged (in court)?"

It was what Tan Sri Muhammad Shafee Abdullah deemed as a "very important question", asking three out of seven witnesses so far.

He posed that question yesterday to Najib's former political secretary Datuk Wong Nai Chee and Batu Kawan Umno division chief Datuk Mohd Noor Ahmad during cross-examination.

Wong and Mohd Noor confirmed that there were no prosecution against them for receiving cheques signed by Najib.

The lawyer also posed this question to the fourth witness Noorhaina Hirawani Mohd Noor on Wednesday.

He then told her that "not all of us are lucky. Some might be charged".

Shafee himself was charged on Sept 13 last year for two counts of money laundering involving RM9.5mil that he received from Najib and two counts of tax evasion.

The trial dates for his case have been moved to March next year.

The second day of the trial yesterday saw Wong testifying that payments by Najib to two organisations



Court date: Najib arriving at the Kuala Lumpur High Court for the 1MDB trial.

went through tycoon Tan Sri Lim Soon Peng instead of to the entities directly.

The payments were meant for a weekly Chinese publication and the administration of the Ah Jib Gor Facebook page.

Wong told the High Court that they needed to get someone trustworthy to make the payments so that the RM246,000 personal cheque would not be "circulated" on Facebook and to prevent others from trying to claim credit using the cheque to enhance their own credibility.

The cheque, which was signed by Najib, was issued to Lim, who would then make back-to-back payments to Taima Journalism and Information Academy - the publisher of

Chinese Weekly - and to AD Network, the administrators of Najib's Chinese Facebook page "Ah Jib Gor".

When re-examined by lead prosecutor Datuk Seri Gopal Sri Ram, Wong said the cheque was issued to Lim because they trusted him.

"He wouldn't run away with the money because the cheques were paid for the expenses incurred for the Chinese weekly publication as well as to maintain the Ah Jib Gor Facebook page," he said.

Wong also said that he was introduced to Lim through Najib when he took on the job as one of Najib's three political secretaries.

He described Lim as the man mobilising the grassroots for Najib's activities as prime minister.

Wong said the Facebook page

was to dispense "fully correct information" from the government to social media users.

On the *Chinese Weekly* publication, he explained that this was to project a more balanced view for Chinese readers as there had been negative perceptions from the community towards government policies.

Wong had also received a cheque dated Jan 21, 2012, amounting to RM30,000 signed by Najib but could not remember exactly when he received the cheque.

He believed that the amount was paid to political analysts.

There was also another RM2,600 cheque dated May 29, 2012, which Wong could not recall.

Mohd Noor testified that he went to meet Najib at the Prime Minister's Office in Putrajaya on Aug 6, 2013, to request for funds for the Batu Kawan division to run its events for the people.

Najib issued a cheque for RM100,000 to Batu Kawan Umno on the same day which was handed to Mohd Noor and used for welfare programmes and contributions for people in Batu Kawan.

Another witness, Rafidah Yahaya, 48, verified 152 documents during an examination-in-chief by DPP Mohamad Mustafa P. Kunyalam.

The Companies Commission of Malaysia (SSM) assistant registrar said the documents were in relation to four companies - Powertek Investment Holding Sdn Bhd, Power-

tek Energy Sdn Bhd, Merpati Energy (Langat) Sdn Bhd and Mastika Lagenda Sdn Bhd.

She said the information on the companies was requested by the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission.

"I processed these applications, these documents I obtained from filing by these companies to SSM, which were stored in the Company and Business System," she said.

All of the documents were marked as evidence.

Najib, 66, faces 25 charges - four for abuse of power that allegedly brought him financial benefit to the tune of RM2.3bil and 21 for money laundering involving the same amount of money.

He was charged for the four abuse of power charges under Section 23(1) of the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission Act, punishable under Section 24 (1) of the same law.

He faces imprisonment of up to 20 years and a fine of up to five times the sum, or value of the gratification or RM10,000, whichever is higher, if found guilty.

The hearing continues before Justice Collin Lawrence Sequerah on Tuesday.