

Najib's trial dates to be finalised today

1MDB court hearing may start next week pending status of SRC case

KUALA LUMPUR: The trial dates for Datuk Seri Najib Razak, who is facing four charges of having used his position to obtain gratification totalling RM2.3bil from 1Malaysia Development Bhd (1MDB) funds and 21 counts of money laundering involving the same money, will be finalised today.

This is subject to whether the SRC International Sdn Bhd trial can be settled today or otherwise.

High Court judge Justice Collin Lawrence Sequerah fixed 4.30pm for both parties (prosecution and defence) to update him on the status of SRC's trial.

The judge had intended the 1MDB trial to commence on Sept 3 (Tuesday) subject to development of the SRC case.

Earlier, former Federal Court judge Datuk Seri Gopal Sri Ram, who was appointed senior deputy public prosecutor, suggested that the 1MDB trial begin on Tuesday as there would be a judicial review on a civil case to disqualify him as lead prosecutor in the 1MDB case on Monday at the Court of Appeal.

"The prosecution is ready to call witnesses to testify on Tuesday without their witness statement," he said.

Meanwhile, Najib's lawyer Tan Sri Muhammad Shafee Abdullah said the appeal on the judicial review would take at least half a day.

He also suggested that the 1MDB trial start on Sept 3 because the defence only had a week to study 15 volumes or 732 documents from

the prosecution.

"We can't concentrate on the 1MDB case while the SRC case is still going on," he said.

Muhammad Shafee said that according to the witness statement of 1MDB's former chief executive officer Datuk Shahrol Azral Ibrahim Halmi, he mentioned that the prosecution asked questions about emails and BlackBerry messages.

"So, the defence is requesting that the prosecution provide documents in relation to that matter," he added.

The lawyer said it had been reported by foreign media that Xavier Andre Justo (a former officer with PetroSaudi International Ltd) had handed about 237,000 documents to the Malaysian Anti-

Corruption Commission (MACC), which might be relevant to the prosecution.

However, Sri Ram said he was never informed and did not have any knowledge about it.

On the four corruption charges, Najib, 66, was alleged to have committed the offences at the Jalan Raja Chulan branch of AmIslamic Bank Berhad here between Feb 24, 2011, and Dec 19, 2014.

Najib is charged under Section 23(1) of the MACC Act and is 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.

For the 21 money laundering charges, Najib was alleged to have committed the offences at the same bank between March 22, 2013, and Aug 30, 2013.

All the charges were made according to Section 4(1)(a) of the Anti-Money Laundering and Anti-Terrorism Financing Act which carries a maximum fine of RM5mil and jail term of five years, or both, if convicted.

Previously, Justice Sequerah had set Aug 19 to 29; the month of September and October except for Fridays; and the first two weeks of November for Najib's 1MDB trial.

The judge had on Monday adjourned the trial, which was scheduled to start on Aug 19, to the following Monday. — Bernama