

EX-PM CROSSES SWORDS WITH A-G

Thomas grills Najib on various issues, including his role in SRC International, Retirement Fund Inc

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TAN Sri Tommy Thomas and Datuk Seri Najib Razak finally crossed swords in the High Court yesterday, with the Attorney-General grilling the former prime minister on everything from his political career to his role in various issues involving SRC International Bhd, which has led him to be in the dock yesterday.

At times, the cross-examination turned into mini arguments with Najib, 66, vehemently denying suggestions put forth to him by Thomas and the A-G shooting back at the accused.

However, both of them remained civil while ultimately driving home points to support their respective arguments.

The much awaited cross-examination of the Pekan member of parliament started at 11.15am after Najib's lead counsel, Tan Sri

Muhammad Shafee Abdullah, finished questioning his client with follow up queries on his witness statement.

Thomas began by asking Najib on the latter's political career and his rise in Umno, before he ultimately became the sixth prime minister.

Najib chose to answer in Bahasa Malaysia even though Thomas posed his questions in English.

However, Najib sometimes reverted to briefly answering in English during parts of his testimony.

Confirming that he started his political career at a young age, Najib said he was appointed as Pahang menteri besar by Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad in 1982.

"I was reluctant (to assume the post) but I had to do it," he said.

Later, Najib got irritated when Thomas went on to ask him about the 1988 Umno crisis with the emergence of Team A and Team B involving Dr Mahathir and Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah.

"I don't see the relevance of this question... What has it got to do with anything now?," he asked but Thomas insisted Najib answer whether he had indeed



Former prime minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak arriving at the Kuala Lumpur High Court yesterday. PIC BY HAFIZ SOHAIMI

backed Dr Mahathir then.

Najib nodded and answered in the affirmative, saying "Yes, I supported Dr Mahathir".

The duo were at it again shortly after that when Thomas suggested that Najib became "his own" finance minister after becoming the prime minister.

Thomas: You were your own finance minister.

Najib: I am objecting to the connotation... the prime minister has the power to appoint the finance minister. I was the finance minister of Malaysia.



Later, Najib said he became finance minister although he was already burdened with his duties as prime minister, Umno president and Barisan Nasional chairman because he thought he had the ability to develop the country.

He cited his achievements, including spearheading the country's economic growth of 5.9 per cent in 2017.

"If you look back at the nine years I was in charge, the country's Gross Domestic Product

grew. When I was finance minister, we grew faster than the four Asian tiger nations. We had the longest bull run.

"We grew steadily. The ringgit was stable during my time and the people also enjoyed more benefits. I am not bragging but I delivered," he said.

Najib said he was not the only prime minister to also hold the finance portfolio, pointing out that Dr Mahathir and Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi had also assumed similar duties previously.

On the sacking of his former deputy, Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin, and former rural and regional development minister Datuk Seri Shafie Apdal in 2015, Najib said it had nothing to do with their disagreement with him over 1Malaysia Development Bhd (1MDB).

He said the duo were only removed after they started criticising in public instead of confining their views within the cabinet.

Later, Thomas and Najib were at it again when the former suggested that SRC International managed to bulldoze its way through everything only because it had the weight of the finance minister's support behind it.

Thomas suggested that there

was no way the Retirement Fund Inc (KWAP) would ever have approved two loans of RM2 billion each to SRC International if Najib had not made a notation stating "setuju" (agree) on a loan proposal document submitted by the company.

Thomas: The KWAP investment panel took your approval to mean that the loan must be approved.

Najib: Why are you saying I approved? It clearly states in the law that they must approve it... not me.

Thomas: If we were following the law we would not be here today, Datuk Seri.

Najib: Yes, but as the A-G, you should know the law... It is the investment panel that has to approve, not me.

Thomas will continue with the cross-examination before judge Mohd Nazlan Mohd Ghazali today.

Najib is accused of committing three counts of criminal breach of trust and one count of abuse of power involving RM42 million of SRC International funds.

He is also facing three money laundering charges over the same funds and faces up to 20 years jail if convicted.