

Najib to take the stand today

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Ex-PM to testify as first defence witness

KUALA LUMPUR: Today is the day that Malaysians will see, for the first in the country's history, a former prime minister take the stand to answer charges against him in a court of law.

Datuk Seri Najib Razak, 66, will testify from the witness box as the first defence witness to rebut his seven charges of misappropriating RM42mil in SRC International Sdn Bhd funds before High Court Judge Mohd Nazlan Mohd Ghazali.

According to his co-counsel Harvinderjit Singh, Najib will be called as the first witness on the opening day of the defence's proceedings.

Najib will be first questioned by his defence during examination-in-chief before being cross-examined by the prosecution.

On Nov 11, Justice Mohd Nazlan ordered Najib to enter his defence on three counts of criminal breach of trust (CBT), three charges of money laundering and one count of abuse of position in relation to the SRC funds after finding that the prosecution had established a prima facie case against him.

The accused has three options which he must choose from - give sworn evidence in the witness box where he will be subjected to cross-examination; give an unsworn statement from the dock where he cannot be cross-examined; or remain silent, in which case the court must proceed to convict him.

The Pekan MP chose the first option.

In his judgment, Justice Mohd Nazlan among others ruled that Najib had used his office or position for gratification and had utilised RM42mil of SRC's funds, in which he had an interest, for his personal interest and own advantage.

The judge also held that the accused had enormous influence and wielded an overarching position of power in SRC and the prosecution had succeeded in establishing CBT by Najib over funds of the company.

In relation to the three money-laundering charges, Justice Mohd Nazlan held that the RM42mil proceeds in Najib's accounts originated from unlawful activity, as established in the CBT charges.

"A prima facie case has therefore been made out against the accused in respect of each of the single charge of use of position for gratification, the three CBT charges and three money laundering charges.

"As such, I call upon the accused to enter his defence in respect of all the seven charges," the judge had ruled.

Najib, who served as the sixth prime minister from 2009 to 2018, is the first ex-head of government of Malaysia to find himself in the dock. He is accused of committing the offences between Aug 17, 2011 and March 2, 2015.

The court fixed Dec 3 and 4, Dec 9 to 12, and Dec 16 to 19 for Najib to enter his defence. — Bernama