

'Najib admitted to RM42mil in bank'

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Ex-PM acknowledged funds in defamation suit's affidavit, court told

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KUALA LUMPUR: The High Court was told that Datuk Seri Najib Razak had admitted, in a defamation suit, that RM42mil from SRC International Sdn Bhd went into his personal bank accounts.

Lawyer Ranjit Singh, who represented Tun Dr Ling Liong Sik in the suit, testified that Najib made the admission in an affidavit in response to his client's statement of defence.

Najib sued Dr Ling for his statement alleging the former prime minister had abused 1Malaysia Development Bhd (1MDB) funds.

Ranjit was reading out Najib's sworn affidavit during an examination-in-chief by ad hoc prosecutor Datuk V. Sithambaram on the 45th day of Najib's corruption trial here

yesterday, where he is accused of misappropriating RM42mil in SRC International's funds.

"Najib also said that between Dec 24, 2014 and Feb 6, 2015, a total of RM42mil was transferred into his accounts through two intermediaries. However, Najib also said that he had no personal knowledge that the money was channeled into his accounts through two intermediaries, namely Gandingan Mentari Sdn Bhd and Ihsan Perdana Sdn Bhd," he said.

The witness said his client had said Najib was unfit to be prime minister and had called for his resignation following news reports of alleged misappropriation of public funds during a function in Kuala Lumpur on Oct 3, 2015.

"He took people's money and put it into his accounts. How could he do

that? This was the basis for my client's opinion that Najib was unfit to be prime minister," Ranjit said.

In relation to the defamation suit, Ranjit said Najib replied that US\$700mil (RM2.9bil), which was also deposited into his accounts from an overseas source, was a personal donation.

Ranjit however told the court that Najib withdrew his suit on May 22, 2018, weeks after the 14th General Election.

On Oct 27, 2015, Najib sued Dr Ling for allegedly slandering him in an article published by a news portal on Oct 3, 2015, claiming that he abused 1MDB funds.

The High Court struck out the case without liberty to refile and ordered Najib to pay RM25,000 in costs.

Ranjit said Dr Ling also withdrew

his counterclaim suit against Najib on Dec 14, 2015 without liberty for the former MCA president to file afresh.

The court also heard that fugitive businessman Low Taek Jho, better known as Jho Low, played an important role in managing Najib's bank accounts.

Former AmBank Bhd relationship manager Joanna Yu said former SRC International CEO Nik Faisal Ariff Kamil, who was the accounts' mandate holder, was the person who "formalised" the instructions coming from Jho Low.

The witness was cross-examined by Najib's lawyer Harvinderjit Singh.

Harvinderjit: Would you agree the instructions and directions from Jho Low and Nik Faisal only formalised it?

Yu: It appears so.

She also said that Jho Low had once asked her to destroy chequebooks relating to three Najib accounts in 2013.

The witness however said she did not do what was asked, but surrendered them to the bank's branch in Jalan Raja Chulan.

"Usually, a chequebook would be handed over to the bank to compute the stamp duty on the balance of unused cheques. So why must we destroy it?" she said.

Najib, 66, is facing three counts of criminal breach of trust, one count of abusing his position and three counts of money laundering involving SRC International funds amounting to RM42mil.

The hearing before Justice Mohd Nazlan Mohd Ghazali continues tomorrow.