

APPLICATION FOR POSTPONEMENT DISMISSED

NAJIB'S 3RD TRIAL TO START NEXT WEEK

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Ex-PM to be tried with ex-1MDB CEO Arul Kanda for allegedly tampering with audit report

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THE third criminal trial involving former prime minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak is slated to start next week after the High Court yesterday dismissed an application to postpone hearings.

This time, Najib will be jointly tried with former 1Malaysia Development Bhd (1MDB) chief executive officer (CEO) Arul Kanda Kandasamy for allegedly tamper-

ing with the strategic development company's final audit report.

Judge Mohamed Zaini Mazlan, in dismissing the prosecution's application, said it was difficult to find alternative dates for the hearings.

Deputy public prosecutor Datuk Seri Gopal Sri Ram, who is leading the prosecution team, had asked for the postponement as the key prosecution witness was testifying under cross-examination in Najib's ongoing criminal hearing involving the misappropriation of RM2.28 billion of 1MDB funds.

Sri Ram told the court that Najib's lead counsel, Tan Sri Muhammad Shafee Abdullah, had on Nov 6 indicated that it was unlikely that the cross-examination of former 1MDB CEO Datuk Shahrol Azral Ibrahim Halmi would be completed by Nov 14.

To this, Zaini said the prose-



Former prime minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak at the High Court in Kuala Lumpur yesterday. PIX BY ASWADI ALIAS

cution could call another witness to give evidence while waiting for Shahrol to finish his testimony.

"I can assure you I will not be pressing him (Shahrol) to give evidence until he completes his testimony in 1MDB's case."

Trial dates were originally fixed for Nov 18 to 29 and Jan 13 to 17.

On Dec 12, Arul Kanda, 43, was charged at the Sessions Court with committing the offence be-

tween Feb 22 and Feb 26, 2016.

He allegedly abetted Najib, 66, in using the latter's position as the then prime minister to order the amendment to the report.

On the same day, Najib was charged with using his then position to order amendments to the 1MDB final audit report before it was tabled to the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) to prevent action from being taken

against him.

Najib was charged, in his capacity as a public officer, with using his position to obtain gratification for himself to evade disciplinary, civil or criminal action against him in connection with 1MDB by ordering alterations to the 1MDB final audit report before it was finalised and tabled to PAC, which he directly had interest in.